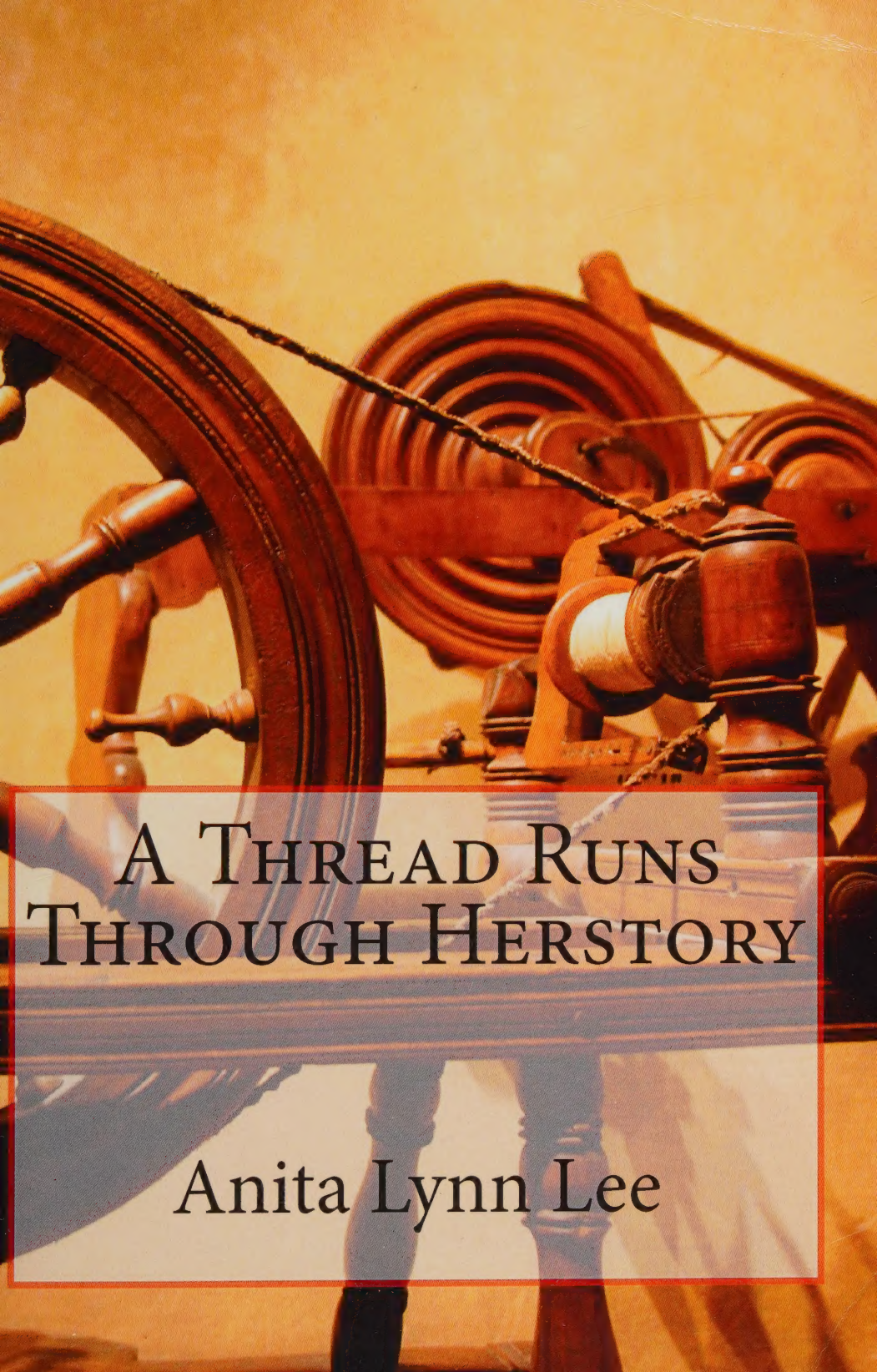

A Thread Runs Through Herstory
Anita Lynn Lee

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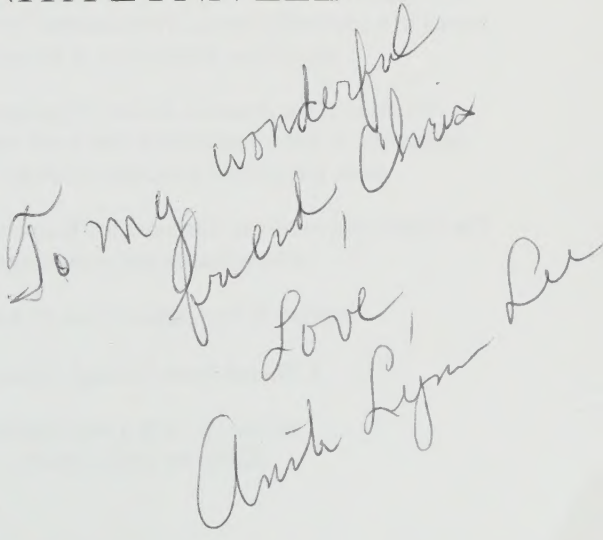
William & Patricia Brown on behalf of The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia

In order to promote interest in DC history

A Thread Runs Through Herstory

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ANITA LYNN LEE



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The details and events in this book are based on each individual's remembrance and perspective.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my family and all of my ancestors who have helped me to become the person that I am today.



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Prologue

This is a story of women who were not heroes and who gained no fame, but their strength was a guiding light for others to follow. So, in that sense they were influential. Here is "Herstory" of small worlds as seen by my eyes and as told by some significant women in my family. These women have given me my voice, and it is through that voice that I now relate my own story within theirs.

Seeking

Who are we and where are we going?

What keeps us anchored? Is it our past or is it our goals for the future?

How do we view this world and the next?

How do our thoughts, our ideas, and dreams form and change?

Why is a particular moment significant in one person's life and yet meaningless to another?

What propels one person on to success and leaves another to wallow in misery?

We all have our own experiences and our own paths in life.

Even two people living in the same family will seem to be a part of the same experiences

But will see things entirely different.

Is it possible that who we are dictates where we go in life?

Life is all about seeking the answers that are important to each one of us. We encounter problems that we have to solve. We come across bumps in the road that we have to climb over or navigate around. We stumble, we fall, we get up, and we keep going.

1 BEGINNING SCRAPS OF AWARENESS



Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

I was born in Washington, DC on December 27, 1951 to a mother from this same capital city and a father who moved here from Amherst County, Virginia. Although my realization emerged in

segments, the first real memory of my existence takes me to a moment when I was three and a half years old.

I was sitting on the floor in our family's living room watching "The Howdy Doody Show" on our exciting new television set. Our TV was in a big piece of furniture. When I opened the door to the left of the TV picture there was a record player which slid out on a shelf. Inside the door below the television was an empty space that looked like a good place to hide. The door beside this empty space from which all of the sound emanated did not open. Although my eyes were attracted to the black and white figures that were dancing and singing on the screen, my curiosity was aimed at how to open the unopened door. It was at this time that the world around me became real.

In less than a year my parents decided to move from our neat little home at 5311 Central Avenue SE where I had lived comfortably with my mom and dad. During that year my baby brother Bill was born, and my mother's mother was ailing. Although we were moving in with my Nana, I had no idea that a change had been planned or that the world as I knew it would be altered forever.

I was four years old and used to getting a lot of attention, but on the day we moved everything was different. People were carrying our furniture out of

the house and lifting things into a truck. Everything that I loved, all of my toys, my dolls, the big red sofa in the living room, our radio that stood in the basement, and even our TV were being carted out of the house. Everything in my world was being put on this truck, and here I stood in the yard and watched, wondering what was going on. Finally, my father and my mother, who was carrying my four-month-old brother Bill came out of the house and took me by the hand as we climbed into our shiny green Buick. With real confusion in my mind and silence in my voice I looked at our house as we drove away.

Life inside Nana's house started out quite hectically. In 1955 Nana, my mother's mother, had bought a two-bedroom Cape Cod house on Vista Street, NE that had an unfinished attic and basement. When we first moved there, it was already furnished with my grandmother's things, so some of our furniture went to the basement, but other things seemed to overcrowd the first floor.

Prior to our move, my Aunt Hazel, my mother's older sister, had moved in with her mother when Nana first became sick. Then Nana's illnesses of high blood pressure and diabetes worsened, and since Hazel worked every day, my mom was needed to help take care of Nana. So to Vista Street my mom

with her family came.

The sleeping arrangements kept undergoing adjustments. At first we slept in the dining room with my brother's crib in the corner. It was difficult for everyone to walk through the narrow path into the kitchen with this arrangement, so it didn't last long. Then I snuggled in between my father and mother in the cold basement where my parents' bed was set up. This arrangement didn't last long either. My Aunt Hazel moved into an apartment soon after we arrived. Once she moved, my parents, my baby brother, and I slept in the bedroom that she vacated. It took my father a few months to organize the furniture and begin his architectural plans to construct rooms in the attic and basement in order to enlarge the living space in our new home.

Although it was crowded inside our house, the outdoors felt quite the opposite. Compared to the row house from which we had moved, houses on this street were much farther apart. Our house was on the corner, and we had a large yard all around our house. Near the end of our block there were woods and a steep embankment that led to the railroad tracks. From my house we would listen to the train pass by every hour. My mom used to say it was like living in the country. Squirrels, garter snakes, and plenty of crickets were

always around. This was before the newer construction boom that would soon erect homes and bring more neighbors close to us.

At that time, though, there was a grassy lot next to our house that was filled with dandelions, and behind our house was a huge double lot filled with apple trees. My mother would gather baskets full of apples and make scrumptious apple pies. She also gathered dandelions to make dandelion wine. My mother planted a grape vine next to our garage, and delicious seeded purple grapes were plentiful all summer long.

In September 1956, I started kindergarten. My Catholic elementary school was very rigid, and my education began the day my mother walked me to the door of a bungalow style house where the kindergarten class was held. It was into this building behind the church and the rectory but near the main school that my kindergarten teacher welcomed me. My teacher was a serious-looking little face inside a drapery of black from head to toe. My mom wanted to stay with me on that first day because I was scared and crying, but as my teacher escorted my mother out, she quietly said, "Your daughter will be fine." When my mother left, my teacher led me to a small room and shut the door leaving me alone. From the other

side of the door she said, "When you stop crying, you may come out." That was my first day of school. I was not quite five years old when I knocked at this door to a school room, and a crack in the door to the real world opened to me.

My family and my school provided a strong foundation for me. They helped me to develop my morals, my attitude, and a love for learning. By the time I was six I came to learn a little about myself and realized that my conscience was active inside of me. Across the street from me lived a family in a big white house. They had a little boy who seemed almost my age, but every day the lady would tie the boy to a tree in the yard like one would tie a dog. He was out there when it was blazing hot and when it was cold. The boy just made sounds but never spoke words. Often he would just moan. The lady would walk away and leave the child there moaning for what seemed like hours. It appeared that the boy could not stand up or walk because he would crawl around as far as the rope would allow him. I wondered what that little boy was thinking and feeling. I felt so bad for him and I tried to figure out what I could do to help. I realized that it was not my place to go across the street and untie him, even though I wanted to do so. I talked to my mother about the situation, but my mom said that she had already called the police a few times until the police

told my mom that it wasn't my mother's business. In my mind I still felt that it was my business. The family across the street moved away that year, and I often wondered what happened to that boy.

One incident which occurred that same year made me feel quite guilty. In fact, I felt that I could never be forgiven for the wrong that I had done. All of my life I had been told that I was beautiful, I was lovely, I was colored, I was a Negro, but there was one thing that I was not – "black." The very mention of the word was tabooed in our house. My mother had an unwritten but often preached law: "Don't talk about anybody's color and don't ever let me hear you say the word 'black' around this house." Well, I committed my worst sin on a hot summer day when I was six years old. During those days many neighbors who lived in our Woodridge section of Washington were white. One lady who lived right down the street from us had her granddaughter spending the summer with her. This girl and I played on the sidewalk or in the yard. All summer long we jumped rope, played tag, climbed trees, and enjoyed each other's company, but the summer was coming to a close, and so too was our relationship. On this day while we were playing hopscotch, we began arguing over whether I stepped on the line or not. It was such a minor incident, but it led to a major war. We just kept fussing and

screaming at each other. Then, we escalated to pushing each other which sent us each flying into our own homes. With unremitting crying, I ran into my house. My mom was washing dishes in the kitchen when I burst through the back door. She asked me what was wrong and I kept sobbing tempestuously, "She hurt me." My mother tried to comfort me, but I was too upset and too angry at my friend. As my mother said, "Tell me what happened," I wouldn't stop crying and the more my mother listened, I went on embellishing my explanation to surely get my playmate in trouble. I continued, "She cheated me and she called be black." This time, in fact, I felt the death warrant for my mortal sin. With that my mother flew out of the house and down the street to the girl's grandmother's house. I wanted to stop my mother. I wanted to take back the lie that had sprung forth. I wanted to take back the loaded missile that would surely cause needless death and destruction to all. But it was too late. Those words proved to be a fatal stab, a stab that sliced its way through the sinews of friendship and killed its prey and victim with a single infliction. Already I could see through my kitchen window that both adults were outside near the driveway speaking seriously, even though I could not hear what they were saying. Then my mother came back into the house and got me as the other lady went

to get her granddaughter. Both of us girls were brought outside to face each other. Although I calmly admitted lying and we girls, supported by the experienced, diplomatic strength of our parenting authorities, hesitantly revealed all incidents of that day before we apologized, that was the last time that I ever saw this girl. Her grandmother moved away from there soon after that as more and more black families moved into the neighborhood. My mother was upset with me for lying but my conscience was already deeply sorry for my guilt. That afternoon, I learned how our world could be destroyed by anger and lies and why people had to work hard at building bridges across differences.

During the next year, I really became more social. Some friendships grew and others disappeared. At school I had a friend who played tag with me. We became close but her family was moving away. Her dog had puppies and before she left she gave me one of the puppies. I named her Sheba. That dog was greatly loved and would remain a part of our family for over 22 years. As I watched many children from school and many families from our neighborhood move away, I saw the changes that swept through. Two new houses were built on the lots behind my house, and another was built on the lot next to my house. A house was built across the street

from us, and more houses were built throughout the Woodridge area. Black families with children who were looking for a nice community moved into Woodridge, and rapidly the white families picked up and left. My brother and I were gaining many friends and playmates. A little girl who was close to my age moved into the house that was built behind us. Another girl moved into the new house just across the street. She had a baby brother and a little sister who was about my brother's age. Up the street lived a family of five boys, and across from them was a boy who was in my class. In a big house facing our street lived my best friend, Stephanie. All of the boys and my best friend went to school with me. At school I would see them, but I had to remain very quiet and studious so as not to get into trouble. At home we would play ball, ride bicycles, talk, and play with dolls. Life was full of fun and there were no big worries.

One trauma that plagued me for many years was witnessing the death of my grandmother. In 1959, when I was seven, Nana died. It was nighttime and my mother, Bill, and I were in bed when I heard noises coming from my grandmother's room across the hall. My mother heard the noises too and jumped out of bed. She ran to her mother's bedroom. I followed her. Harsh guttural noises were coming

from Nana's throat and her breathing was hard. She seemed to be choking. I stood at the bedroom door as my mother tried to prop her mother up in bed, but Nana's eyes didn't open. Something really seemed to be wrong with Nana. Daddy was at work, and my mother was trying hard to help Nana. I wanted to help too, but somehow those noises frightened me. My mother ran to the phone to call a neighbor, and all I could do was stand there at my grandmother's bedroom door. She kept gagging and having trouble catching her breath. The sounds scared me, but I didn't know what to do. My mother came back and rubbed her mother's hands as she talked gently to Nana, but Nana just made gurgling noises. Suddenly Mr. Gales from around the corner came in and so did Mrs. Nickerson from next door. Mrs. Nickerson put warm wash cloths on Nana's head, and Mr. Gale blew into her mouth. They told my mom to call the doctor, and my mother did. She also called the operator, who connected her to an ambulance. I knew that Nana had been sick, but I was very confused about all the noises that she was making and all of the hustle and bustle from the adults. I tried to stand very quietly at the corner near the door as the adults ignored me and worked over Nana. The gasping for breath grew more intense, and her body was jerking. Suddenly a loud breath came out of Nana's mouth, and then she made

no more sounds. I heard the ambulance siren outside, and men came into the room with a stretcher. They picked up Nana and took her to the kitchen table. They blew into her mouth and pushed on her chest a few times. Then they told my mother, "She's gone."

This was my first view of death, but it had a psychological effect on me. For many years thereafter I had trouble falling asleep. When I lay in the bed I would begin hyperventilating. My mom often came in to rub my back and recited the 23rd Psalm to me. Her peaceful prayers and soothing hands would help me to fall asleep.

Me

I must be here, for here is where I see me.

But I feel there too.

Part of me lies in all the people

That were,

The lineage of people

That forms the thread of what is now me.

Their history is my history.

Their stories are my stories.

Their lives live on in me

And the many pieces they are

Are me

And I am them.

2 DIFFERENT FABRICS

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

During the summer of 1994 I went to visit my mother and as I listened to her talk, I saw loveliness. I thought about how my mother, Evelyn Christian, was probably one of the most beautiful people that I knew. She had that inner beauty that radiated her whole being. She was giving, straight-forward, and charitable. This well-aged retired school teacher prayed the rosary daily, volunteered wholeheartedly in her church, helped neighborhood children, and was always looking out for her family. Tears came into her eyes as she told her story. "Your life is never a closed book," she said, "we just keep writing new pages." So as we talked, I listened to her story.



Evelyn Marian Shaw Christian:

On the first day of June 1914, when spring was budding into summer, I was born at Columbia Hospital in Washington, DC. Already my big sister Hazel was waiting to be my protector and my best friend. Hazel was four years older than I and eager to welcome me. I was very close to my sister and she helped me learn and understand many things of the world around me.

In those days we were called colored people or Negroes, and Negro families had a strong family bond. When we talked about family it meant the whole extended family. My sister and I were raised by my mother, uncle, grandfather, and grandmother. My mother and father were separated soon after I was born and I never knew him. I never felt that I had missed out on having a father because there was so much love in our home.

I didn't learn much about my father, John (Charles) Hill, and Blanche never talked about a husband. I occasionally heard family members talk about a person named Hill or Charles Hill, but I never remembered seeing him. If I hadn't eventually obtained some documents, such as my birth certificate, naming John and Blanche (Shaw) Hill, I would never have known my father's name or that he was a laborer from Georgia who was 27 when I was born. In June 1914, though, Blanche and John Hill were living at 463 Washington Street NW, just up the street from Blanche's parents; but soon after I was born, my father left, and my mother took back her maiden name and never used the last name Hill again. I don't know what happened or why she did this. Back then, if someone wanted you to know something, they'd tell you. If they didn't tell you, you knew not to ask. Adults were the ones who did the

talking and we children could pick up information only by sitting quietly and listening as adults talked among themselves. I never asked a whole lot of questions.

My mother, Blanche Shaw, was a strong, hard-working, single parent. She was very direct and quite short tempered, so when she said do something, we knew that she meant then and there. She was never the warm, nurturing type of mother, but she was the responsible, commanding leader of our family. My sister and I always called my mother by her first name, and Blanche had no play in her. She had a very good business sense and some definite goals for her family. Blanche was always striving to get ahead. My mother had very little time to be with us because she was often working.

Blanche had been born on April 25, 1892 in her parents' home on 439 Washington Street, NW in DC. She was delivered by Sarah Jackson, a midwife who lived in Nailer's Alley, which was between the 4th and 5th block of K and L Streets. Blanche grew up on Washington Street, situated downtown between the 4th and 5th block of G and H Streets, with her parents and her younger brother, Thomas (whom the family called "Brother").

By the time Blanche was twenty-five years

old, she was the head of our extended family. One of her goals was to live "up on the hill" which was above 14th and W Streets, NW. Although all neighborhoods were pretty safe and wholesome, she felt that this was one of the best neighborhoods for "Negroes" in DC. Well, Blanche moved her family quite a few times. Each move was for better and larger houses in which she could rent out rooms to help with expenses. Nothing could deter Blanche. She merely took in roomers whose rent gave Blanche greater revenue and helped her get closer and closer to her goal.

Blanche's father and my grandfather, Thomas Shaw, was a chef cook at a hotel downtown. He was born in May 1865 in Maryland and got married when he was twenty years old. It was this quiet, mild-mannered man whom the family called Papa. Hazel and I used to sit on Papa's lap in the evenings and talk to him. He would give us most things that we asked for. I recall that we used to chime, "Can I have a nickel, Huh, Pa, Huh, Pa, Huh, Pa?" For a nickel we could both get some ice cream. When Papa had it, he would give it to us. Many times he would defer decisions to his wife. When we asked, "Papa, can we go up the block?''

Papa would say, "Ask Mama. If it's all right with her, it's all right with me."

Whenever we girls did something amiss and we were going to be punished by Mama, Papa would hide us and protect us. Sometimes when we were supposed to get a spanking, he would let us get under the covers, and Papa would hit the covers. We'd giggle and give Papa a big hug. Then he'd say, "Don't tell Mama." Papa always worked hard. Even when many people were losing their jobs, Papa was able to keep his job. There were times when he had to undergo periods of furlough and had to stay off without pay for a week or two. This was a way to cut costs at the hotel without firing people. There happened to be a song that was out during that time that Papa didn't like us to sing, especially during the furlough periods. Some of its words were: "Everybody's working but father. He sits around all day." However Papa never really lost his job, so between Blanche and Papa, we always had food, clothing, and spending money in our household.

Mary Williams (Ryan) Shaw was Papa's wife and my grandmother. Mary had also been born in Maryland in March 1867 and had one sister, Martha. Mary and Martha Williams were raised by a white family, the Ryans, soon after the Civil War. My grandmother and aunt never told us anything about their own mother or father or the Ryan family. Of course, in those days we didn't ask questions. My

grandmother was a housewife and had been very mothering to her own two children, Blanche and Brother; likewise, as I was growing up, she nurtured Hazel and me. She cooked, cleaned, and took care of us with her warm, patient way. I loved to play hopscotch and jump rope, and my grandmother played these games outside with me. In our family she was "Mama." Mama helped to develop our moral character and our behavioral strengths. She spoke very few words, and when she spoke, she often used idioms to express her point. She always sensed when we girls did anything wrong, even when she didn't catch us in the act. She would look at us out of the corner of her eye and say, "Pitcher don't go to the well too often, don't get broke." With these words we girls knew that Mama knew exactly what we were doing.

I didn't like the way Mama fixed my hair but I never told her that. I would whisper to Hazel in the morning, "You going to fix my hair?" If Mama called me to get my hair done before Hazel got a chance to do it, Mama would plait my hair with three plaits. Two in the back and one that was a little to the right front side but it would hang down in my face and across my eyes. When Hazel and I got outside I would say, "I don't want my hair like this," and Hazel would fix it.

I also hated to wear a hat even in the winter, but Mama said, "You better put a hat on or you'll catch a death of cold." So I'd start out the house with the hat and take it off as I went down the street.

What a picky eater I was! I really didn't like most foods, but I loved pork chops. I think that it was my mother's favorite food also because we had it often. Sometimes Mama even fixed pork chops for breakfast. We seldom had chicken or beef for dinner. During Lent we had baked fish or a pot of beans on Fridays. My grandmother often said, "Not even a dog'll eat meat on Fridays." We often had desserts, and that satisfied me. Actually, the dessert was my favorite part of the meal, and I didn't really care about what came before it. I especially loved chocolate ice cream and cookies. When I didn't like something on my plate I would wrap it up in my napkin and say that I needed to save it for my lunch. When I got outside I would feed the food to my dog.

The ice man would deliver a big block of ice with his tongs and place it on the top of the ice box to keep food cold all day. Our ice box held very little, so in the morning, Mama would get up and walk to the butcher to get fresh meats for the day. Sometimes she took Hazel and me to the market with her. At times, Mama sent Hazel and me to a grocer up the street.

Our grocer, Mr. Epstein, was as kind as he could be. If my grandmother did not have enough money, he would keep a tab of what she owed until Blanche got paid and could pay the bill. Our grocer was like a neighborhood friend. He knew everyone by name and tried to accommodate people. He used to tell my grandmother, "Mary, you make sure those girls finish school. If they need anything just ask me."

People liked Mama because she was always kind and friendly. Mama would give the shirt off her back to anyone who needed it. We were not well-off, but people in our family always had a job, so we had some money. Every month Mama took some of the money that Papa gave her, and she would buy penny stocks from a broker who came to the door. She also put away some money in a jar to keep for "a rainy day."

During the 1920's behind our house on Eye Street was an alley, but in this alley some people lived in shanties made of planks of wood. These shanties had no electricity and no indoor plumbing. Some people in our neighborhood did not speak to the people who lived in the alley, but with a smile on her face, Mama spoke to everyone. She would often share food and clothing with these people. She said, "People come in all kind of different fabrics for to

make up this world."

Mama did not like people comparing themselves or putting each other down based on color. She said that there was beauty in differences. Mama was a short, plump, dark-skinned woman with short black hair. Her husband was a tall, large-framed light-skinned man with large white wavy curls on his head. Mama's son, Brother, took his coloring after her and my mother, Blanche, took her coloring after Papa. Mama told me that when Brother and Blanche were growing up they use to get into arguments all of the time because Blanche was so fussy. One day, though, she went too far.

Blanche yelled at Brother, "You are black!" In those days that was a terrible name with the connotation that because he was darker than she was, she was better than he was. Well, Mama was in the next room and heard Blanche. She flew in there and snatched Blanche off her feet. She told Blanche that if she ever called anyone "black" again, it would be the last word in her life that she would say. Hazel and I grew up knowing that the word "black" should never be used around our house when talking about people.

Mama suffered from high blood pressure. "The pressure" is what they called it back then. She had dizzy spells and she would black out. The doctors

would just tell her to stay in bed. Mama said that she got the pressure from raising Blanche. Mama told us that Blanche always wanted her way and she was always fussing. One day when Blanche was about thirteen, the men along the street teased Blanche as she was coming home from school because they just wanted to see her agitated. They knew Blanche hated liver, so one began, "Hi, Miss Blanche, I smell some good liver cooking at your house."

The other said, "Sure is. I saw Mary buy it from the butcher this morning."

With that Blanche stomped her feet, poked out her mouth, and started fussing, "I don't want no liver. I want pork chops." She fussed all the way down the street and came in the house fussing.

My earliest memory was when I was about four years old and we were living at 439 Eye Street, NW. During that year there was a race riot in DC. White men were rioting. They came through black neighborhoods attacking or killing black people along the streets because a black man whom they felt was guilty had been released from jail. Brother was out at work and our family was afraid for him. When a mob came down our block, my grandmother saw them through the window and told us to get down, but the mob didn't come to our house. Instead, they stopped

at a house where white people lived. The men asked if any colored people lived in the neighborhood, and some courageous neighbors took the risk of protecting us by saying that no colored people lived around there. So the mob left our area.

When I was about six, I liked to play hopscotch and jump rope on the sidewalk. There was a little girl who lived next door. She was the daughter of a woman who took in washing and the girl always had to help her mother with the clothes. In those days, people washed clothes by hand using a tin tub and ridged washboard. I would knock on the door and ask, "Can Grace come out and play?"

"No," her mother would say. "She has to do her work. If she gets through in time she can come out." Most days she never came out, but some days she would come and play for about fifteen or twenty minutes before her mother called her back in.

The person that I always enjoyed playing with was my sister. I was very close to Hazel. We were best friends and we did everything together. Of course there were no televisions back then so we played games and acted out little childhood dramas. While I was around six years old and Hazel was ten, we made up a game that we played together for years. We called it "Two Big Sisters." We dressed up in my

mother's old clothes with pocketbooks and hats. Then we pretended to be two big sisters going to work. As we grew, Hazel and I continued to be close, and long after we stopped playing the game we still called ourselves "Two Big Sisters."

Some strange things happened while we were living in that home on Eye Street. The front door had a pull-out doorbell that made a loud "Ding Dong" sound when someone pulled out the ringer. That was nice to have since the house had no electric or battery operated doorbell. The odd thing was that every day at 6:25 p.m. the doorbell would ring and when we went to answer the door, no one would be there. Blanche said that some neighborhood children were just playing tricks and she was tired of them doing that. One day Brother stationed himself at the door at 6:15 so that he could watch and see who was trying to play a trick. Brother said that no one came up to our door but at 6:25 the ringer slowly pulled out from the door on its own and then went back in. After that we stopped going to the door at 6:25.

Also in this house occasionally a mysterious lady whom no one knew would walk down the stairs and disappear when she got to the door. Everyone in the family saw the lady at different times but the lady never said anything to anyone and never even looked

at us. The first day that I saw her I was sitting at the front window with Mama waiting for Blanche to come home. I was surprised to see the woman on our steps and asked Mama, "Who's that?"

Mama said, "Jes a poor lost soul can't go home."

Papa's death was my first experience with life coming to an end. Papa died while we were living on Eye Street and his coffin sat in our living room for days until his funeral. I tried not to look in the living room when I walked past it because I didn't want to see Papa lying in that casket. I wanted Papa to be in his room ready to hide me and protect me. I wanted him to come to my room and pretend to spank me by hitting the covers. I wanted to see Papa smile and laugh like he always had, but because of the practice of having extended wakes at the home, the reality of death was blatantly staring me in the face.

Blanche rented various homes as she moved farther uptown in Northwest from Eye Street, to 1339 Corcoran Street to 1410 Corcoran Street to 1760 T Street NW. The home we lived in the longest was at 14th and Corcoran Street. This large row house had four floors, including the basement. It had six bedrooms, a large eat-in kitchen in the English basement (which was where the family gathered), a

parlor, a dining room, a living room, and two bathrooms. Mama would sit at the back window looking outside at my dog. I always had dogs because I loved them. My German shepherd use to love to lie under the kitchen table. Sometimes when the dog would come into the room with Mama, she would say, "Get that dog outta here."

All of our homes were heated by coal. There was a chute that led into our basement, and the coal man would bring coal and shoot it down the chute. When Brother came home, he would shovel the coal into the furnace. When we first moved to T Street, the home was lit with gas mantles. Our house had lamps that operated by heating a mantle with a gas flame. When the mantles were lit they gave light to the rooms. Gas mantles were very fragile, and once they had been heated, they easily crumbled. A globe or shade was placed over the mantle to protect it. When adults in our house lit the mantle with a long match, they had to be careful not to touch the fragile mantle. We children didn't touch the lamps at all. In fact I was afraid of them because Mama would say to us, "Don't touch it. Don't even try to touch it. If you touch it, it'll fall to pieces."

My mother, Blanche, was a proud woman. She worked as an elevator operator at the medical

building on Vermont Avenue, NW when our family lived in the Eye and Corcoran Street houses. Although the job was most important to her because she had to support Hazel and me, Blanche would take no injustice from anyone. It was very difficult for black people to get good jobs, and this medical building did hire a few black people as long as their skin was fair.

Blanche formed the first union of elevator operators at this building because the demands of long days, very short lunch breaks, low wages, and costly laundering of their uniforms was quite taxing for these elevator operators. Many of the other workers were afraid of losing their jobs, but Blanche convinced them that without a union they might still lose their jobs, and no one would continue to listen to their job needs. During those roaring twenties Blanche was able to form a union of elevator operators at her job and encouraged other domestic workers to form a union too. These unions enabled workers' lunch breaks to be set at one hour, established schedules with shifts and provided uniforms to be laundered at no expense to the workers. Blanche was recognized for her hard work and was regarded well by all doctors and building administrators there. Blanche worked hard, but she demanded respectful treatment for herself and her fellow workers. In spite of her gains, Blanche could not change the times in which

she lived or the rules of the times. Colored people could not eat in the downtown restaurants, or even in the cafeteria of the medical building where she worked.

Through sunshine, rain, or snow, my mother walked to and from work each day. Sometimes, she even walked home at midday for lunch. There were many dark winter evenings that I sat with my sister by the front window or peeped out the front door while waiting for my mother to come home and worrying for her safety. Even on very cold days when men in trucks, like the coal man, offered Blanche a ride, she refused. She was an independent person who didn't socialize much with people that she didn't know. She thought those men might have been trying to flirt with her so she just kept walking on her daily trek to and from home and her job.

After her relationship with my father, John Hill, I guess Blanche was cautious about getting involved with men because I never saw her in any serious relationship with another man. Blanche was a nice looking woman, and lots of men liked her, but she wasn't interested in any of them, except Mr. King. Mr. King was a clean cut, quiet, dark-skinned man who was a barber. His shop was around the corner from our house. Although he didn't come often, for

years he occasionally came to the house to court Blanche and she seemed to have liked him. Then one day I heard her tell Brother that she went to his barber shop and a lady was there who said that she was Mrs. King, his wife. Blanche said that she held her head up and walked out of the shop. Blanche told Brother that she never imagined that this man was married but found out that he had been married for years and had two children that he was putting through school. That ended the chapter of Mr. King in Blanche's life, and she never showed any emotion about it.

I Am From

I am from secrets

Deep hidden secrets behind walls that never speak

And people who believe in don't ask, won't tell

I am from secrets.

I am from music

Happy joyful music sung, whistled, hummed,

Listened to and played on the piano

I am from music.

I am from education

Building, choosing, attending, instructing in schools

For all eager to learn and teach

I am from education.

I am from church-goers

Worshiping the Lord through prayer and song

In Sunday service and daily prayer

I am from church-goers.

I am from hard work

Afterschool jobs with aim toward a career

Labors of love in teaching, farming, and caregiving

I am from hard work.

I am from savings

In cookie jars, banks, stocks, funds, and investments

Because future needs and rainy days always come

I am from savings.

I am from land owners

Yards, acres, farmland, homes

Obtaining a piece of the rock to enhance

I am from land owners.

I am from go-getters

Setting goals and making plans to reach them

By giving 110% of time, energy, and determination

I am from go-getters.

I am from family

Moving away yet gravitating together

Closely knit extended members anchor their support

I am from family.

3 PLANNED FAMILY PATTERN

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

Most of my traveling as a child was to Virginia to visit my grandparents on my father's side or to Atlantic City to see my aunts and uncle. Every summer my parents, my brother, and I would enjoy going to Atlantic City. My Great-aunt Alma, the sister of my father's mother, was the first family member to move there when she was about 16 or 17 years old. She went there to be a housekeeper for the James family, the famous Salt Water Taffy makers. She was well loved by that family and when she retired they provided a home where she could reside for the rest of her life. It was at her home on Atlantic Avenue where we would often stay. When my father's sister, Elizabeth, turned about 16 or 17 her Aunt Alma brought her from Virginia to live in Atlantic City. Aunt Elizabeth, like everyone in my father's family, could sew extremely well, and she became a wonderful seamstress. Her business flourished in Atlantic City even as she met and married Theodore Fitzgerald. She and Uncle Theo had

one daughter, Madra, who was grown, married, and living in New York City by the time I was a child. Madra had three children: Dorian, Andria, and Kirk. They were a bit younger than my brother and I but when they came down to see their grandparents and we came up to see our aunts and uncle we all enjoyed being together.

The biggest thrills of Atlantic City were going on the boardwalk and enjoying the beach. We would spend at least one day just being on the beach. At the beach my family walked barefoot in the sand and looked for shells. My brother and I ran into the water and jumped over each wave as it was rolling in. My parents loved the beach and played with us as we got into the water. I preferred spending time on the boardwalk because there were so many things to do. Atlantic City's boardwalk was like a children's paradise. As far as you could see up and down the boardwalk were hotels, shops and vendors with candy, toys, and clothing. There were amusement park rides and games. Always day or night the boardwalk was filled with people walking and being pushed in rolling chairs. Ice cream, cotton candy, salt water taffy, and all of the sweet things were there for the buying. Then there was the Steel Pier, which had shows, magicians, singers, and so many activities that it would take us a whole day just to do some of them. I

loved to see the lady climb up on a big diving board high in the sky and then mount a horse that had been hoisted up there. The lady would get on the horse and they would dive off that board into a tank of water. I also loved the House of Mirrors, with its walls of various curved mirrors and its floors inclined at different angles. I would get lost in there and had to try to find my way out. One thing that I was afraid to enter was the submarine. I always wondered what it might be like to get into it but was too scared of being closed in that machine as it submerged under the water, so I quickly passed by the line of people waiting to enter the submarine. This boardwalk was so spectacular that I never wanted to leave it. In fact my brother and I were having so much fun there one summer when I was ten that my parents pulled the rug out from under our feet. After enjoying our day on the boardwalk and making plans for the next day, when Bill and I went to sleep our mom and dad picked us up and put us in the car. When we awakened the next morning and thought we would have another adventurous day in Atlantic City, we actually were home in our own beds. Wow, were we surprised! It wasn't until we were adults that my mom revealed that my parents had run out of money and did not want to disappoint us the next day by constantly having to say "No" to everything that we wanted to do

or buy so they took us home.

My father, William Lester Christian, use to get up early each morning and dress before the rest of the family awoke. He always slept in his tee shirt and jockey shorts and he would climb out of bed early in the morning and meticulously take out each item he would wear for that day. He laid the pieces of clothing one by one on his bed. This was the beginning of his ritual. Then in no time he would wash, dress and begin singing his barber shop tune: "Good morning, Mrs. Epps. You sure is looking fine with your hair cut short, with your hair cut short, with your hair cut short as mine." His song was the family's wakeup call and daddy was like a radio-alarm clock. After three or four rounds of his "Good Morning" song we would sleepily climb out of bed. Our awakening ended the bugle call for that morning, but the comfort of my father's regiment guided the order of our household for years to follow.

My family had some clear routines that kept our lives on track. Dad worked at the Government Printing Office on North Capitol Street near Union Station and his work hours were as punctual as the trains that traveled in and out of our city. He left for work each morning at 7:30, and returned home at 5:00 in the evening. Our family's meals were scheduled

around this time frame. After getting up and dressing for school, we'd come into the kitchen where mom would have our breakfast of bacon or sausage, eggs, applesauce, and toast ready for us. Mom always had the radio on while she was cooking and it was tuned to the Arthur Godfrey Show. Before the show began, the radio broadcast joyfully opened with the song, "Bless This House, Oh, Lord, We Pray." That would be the song that I heard when I came downstairs. When we returned home in the evening, mom would begin fixing dinner while I did my homework. As soon as daddy came in, we would all sit down and have dinner at 5:00 p.m. We knew this schedule and built our lives around it.

My father kept us in shape by walking. Many days after dinner or early on Saturday mornings Dad would take Bill and me for nice, long, peaceful walks. It was our time to be with him and it was fun. We often crossed the woods by the railroad tracks at Chestnut and Elm and headed over to Fort Lincoln. Sometimes we would watch the swans in the pond and play around the beautiful floral clock. Other times we pretended to shoot the canons that sat on the hill. A few days we walked a little farther to Peace Cross to view the Anacostia River, but there were also days that we'd just stand on South Dakota Avenue and look over the bridge at the trains traveling underneath. I

never knew where we were going to walk when we started out with Dad. We just might head south on Rhode Island Avenue toward downtown or north into Mount Rainier. Even though the destination was a surprise, it was the journey that was important. I enjoyed those long walks with my father because it was fun being with him. Those treks also helped me appreciate how peaceful and relaxing it could be to leave everything behind and just view the beauty of our world.

Since my father always took our little family to visit relatives, my brother and I grew up with a strong connection to our aunts, uncles, and cousins. When I was nine my father's sisters, Edith and Alma, and my father's niece, Goldie, lived in Washington near each other. Aunt Edith and her husband, Uncle Wes, had bought a beautiful rambler at 704 Adrian Street SE to raise their daughter, my cousin Pam. It was in a nice middle-class neighborhood. When we visited, my brother and I would go with Pam downstairs to her recreation room. The stairs were in the center of the house, so in playing, Bill, Pam, and I could pass through all parts of the huge basement as we ran around the stairs. Even though I really didn't know how to play pool and didn't know anyone else with a pool table, I liked the pool table that was in one section of the rec room because it seemed like quite an

exotic toy.

Uncle Wes was a bit older than Aunt Edith. My dad said that he had been Aunt Edith's teacher in New Jersey after she moved there. He was a graduate of Wilberforce College and always seemed to know a lot of information about a lot of subjects. He was also a funny man who could one minute look serious and the next minute break out with a sophisticated joke and a laugh. This five-foot seven inch man, who was balding, had false teeth and was a little round in the middle, often had a strong smelling pipe stuck out the right side of his mouth. Uncle Wes loved to play with us. He had a funny way of sneaking down stairs while we were playing and when one of us came around the bend, he would be there with his false teeth halfway out of his mouth like skeleton choppers and his pipe lifted into the air like a trophy. He would sneak out and say, "Boo!"

As often as we went there and as often as Uncle Wes played that trick, it still startled my brother and me. We would run up the stairs to the safety of our parents and aunt and then peep back down the steps to see if he was coming after us. When he eventually did come up with everybody else, his teeth and his pipe would be back in his mouth and he acted as if nothing had happened. How exciting it was to

visit Uncle Wes and Aunt Edith!

Sunday afternoon was often the time when my family visited relatives. Some Sundays we visited my great-aunt and uncle, Aunt Emma and Uncle Fred, on 2nd Street near Howard University and the old Griffith Stadium. They lived on the first floor of a duplex and Uncle Fred's nephew, John Johnson, lived upstairs with his wife, Mary, and their children. When we visited my aunt and uncle, those cousins, who ranged in age from toddlers to teens, came downstairs to see Bill and me. Uncle Fred's real name was Shadrach and he was one of my grandfather's brothers. He and Aunt Emma had no children but were quite generous in helping family members. They not only looked out for John and Mary and their children, they were part of the support system that anchored my father when he came to DC.

Uncle Fred was quite ill when we visited and occasionally would be sitting next to the potbelly stove in the dining room but often would be confined to his bed in the bedroom. Aunt Emma, a small, friendly, loving person always had a big meal prepared, even though our visits were usually spontaneous and without prior notice. My mother also had a grand Sunday dinner prepared and waiting at home but she said that we would seem impolite if

we didn't eat a little of what Aunt Emma offered us, so we did.

Uncle Fred died just before my ninth birthday but we continued to visit Aunt Emma for years. Even when Aunt Emma showed signs of dementia she continued to live alone in that downstairs apartment with nephews and nieces upstairs. Around 1969 when she was no longer able to live alone she was moved into DC Village, a rest home that was run by the city. We continued to visit her there on many Sundays but whenever I went I did not want to leave because I did not like the idea of Aunt Emma being left alone in that place with no family. Every time we were ready to leave I remember hearing her say, "Don't go," and those words haunted me long after we drove away.

When I was eight years old and Bill was beginning kindergarten, my mother started teaching at John Burroughs School, a public school near our house. Mom and a few other parents took turns driving all of us neighborhood children to school and picking us up. When I look back on those years it is amazing how many of us would ride in those cars. Without car seats and seat belt laws, no one even thought about the safety risks of fitting eight people in a sedan. Luckily we all survived. Whenever our school was closed for a day or when we were sick and

couldn't go to school, we would stay at Mrs. Gale's house. Mrs. Gale, one of mom's close friends, was like a neighborhood mother to Bill and me. She was a stay-at-home mom and her husband worked for the post office. I liked going to Mrs. Gale's house. We would relax in her sitting room with her and her German Shepherd Dog, Tippy, where we would read, do puzzles, or watch *The Price is Right* before "the stories" came on. Although I loved *The Price is Right*, my mother never watched any of the soap operas at home, and I thought that they seemed slow and boring; however, at Mrs. Gale's house she definitely watched the stories and her TV station was tuned to them. We also brought a lunch box with food in it, but she would have snacks for us to eat. While Bill was in the half-day kindergarten program, Mr. White, another neighbor who worked at St. Francis, brought Bill to Mrs. Gale's house for the afternoon. For me, it was never difficult to have my mother working because of that wholesome support in our neighborhood.

I was lucky to grow up in a neighborhood that was really like a village. Adults supported each other and looked out for their neighbors' children. Although I loved and respected these adults who helped to raise me, I don't think that I truly appreciated how special these people were until I got older. For the Christmas

of 1961, the one doll that every girl wanted was a Barbie doll. My friend Stephanie and I both asked for Barbie dolls and outfits for the dolls on our Christmas lists. In fact these were the only things that I really wanted for Christmas. Barbie was no baby doll. She was a one-foot tall beautiful teenage model who wore changeable fancy clothes and high heel shoes. I was truly looking forward to my very own Barbie. Well, my parents always attempted to make my brother and me happy, but they didn't always have the money to get us everything that we wanted, even though they tried. On Christmas morning I was beaming when I saw the wrapped box that I knew would be my Barbie. Eagerly I tore off the bow and paper and opened the box. I was so surprised to see an imitation plastic teenage doll that looked something like Barbie but was not. I had a Brenda. Who was Brenda? I couldn't believe it. I had a fake Barbie. My mother was excited and thought that I would be too.

"Open up the big box and see the outfits," Mom exclaimed.

I thought maybe with genuine Barbie clothes this doll would look like the real thing. I slowly took the wrappings off the next box and opened it. Inside it was filled with dresses, skirts, pants, blouses, coats, sweaters, tops, shoes, hats, jewelry, and pocketbooks

– all handmade! I could see that my mother was bubbling with excitement, so I held in my feelings of disappointment and said, "Wow, this is really nice."

My mom revealed, "Mrs. Nickerson made all of these lovely outfits for your doll, and she said that she has even started some more that will be ready soon."

"Really," I mumbled halfheartedly. Even though I knew that our next door neighbor, Mrs. Nickerson, had created these outfits with love, and my mom had wished to give me all of the things that I wanted in her own way, I felt let down in not getting that name-brand doll with name-brand outfits. I was also embarrassed when Stephanie came down to my house with her genuine doll and said, "Let's play Barbie." This was my first influence of commercialism. Things happen for a reason. Perhaps not getting what I wanted that Christmas helped to form my lack of desire for many commercial name-brand things.

Perhaps by nature or by circumstance, I gradually became enamored with the role of a teacher. I liked my teachers at St. Francis and always loved learning in school. Teachers helped to build up my strength in so many ways. I felt proud when Sister Helen Victor, my first-grade teacher, called on me to

read from stories about Dick and Jane in our reader. In second grade when I had Sister Marie Bernice again, after first having her in kindergarten, I received much warm comforting when my grandmother died. In fact, all of the nuns at St. Francis de Sales gave me a strong foundation for learning, but my favorite teacher was Sister Frances, a strict-looking, older teacher, whom I feared in younger grades but came to adore in seventh grade for the mastery of core curricula that she demanded.

A few times when Catholic schools were off and public schools were in session, I would go to school with my mom. I loved watching her teach and being in her room. Mom taught sixth grade, and all of the students, the desks, and the room seemed a bit different from my Catholic school. First of all in my mother's class no child wore uniforms, and of course the teacher did not wear a black and white habit. My mother's room had beautiful, fancy bulletin boards that she created herself. At Burroughs the desks were not in rows but were in rectangular groups. I sometimes sat next to one of the girls, and I tried to learn what my mother was teaching. Although mom had about 40 students in her class and there were even more in my class at St. Francis, I could see that being a teacher meant connecting with and reaching each student.

One day when I was about eight or nine, my mother bought a spinet piano and I began taking piano lessons at St. Francis de Sales. In the basement of the convent the nuns would teach children to play after school, and I took my music seriously. I practiced every morning after I dressed and ate breakfast, and I practiced every afternoon after I did homework. I really enjoyed playing the piano. By the time I was in the sixth grade, St. Francis would enter some of the students in a piano competition at Catholic University, and for three years I was one of the entrants. This meant that I had to practice extremely hard, then memorize and master the pieces that I would play. One of the pieces that I enjoyed playing was the first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata." On the day of the competition as I walked to the middle of the stage and sat at the grand piano, I was terrified. I was not used to a piano that large, and I was afraid of playing in front of people that I didn't know, but once I started playing my tensions eased. When I played, my mind, my heart, and my soul always could feel swept away into the music. I never won any of the competitions, but entering each year was a great experience for me and perhaps a few years later was one of the factors in Catholic University's offer of a music scholarship to me. Mom insisted that my brother take piano lessons after he turned about seven

but even though he took the lessons for a few years he wasn't that fond of playing the piano so he didn't practice much. When Bill eventually said that he wanted to quit, my mother, who was a lover of music, tried another instrument for him. She put him into accordion lessons for a few years, but he didn't like that either. I think that some things are for certain people and Bill may not have found the instrument for him, or perhaps taking lessons was just not right for him at that time, but he found his own niche in the arts. He would later become an actor and really enjoy that profession.

Soon after my mother bought the piano, our next door neighbor, Mrs. Nickerson, brought over two big box-loads of sheet music and music books that she had kept for years. There were hymns and spirituals, ragtime and jazz music, classical music and popular music from the 1920's, 30's, and 40's. Some of the music was so old that the pages were yellowed and crumbling, but I cherished them and on my own started learning how to play these different types of music which I was not learning in my formal music class. Most of the music was very intricate to learn, and I asked Mrs. Nickerson to play some of the pieces, which she did. I marveled at how beautifully she played, even though I knew that she probably had not played those songs recently. My talented next

door neighbor said that she had stopped playing the piano years ago. Mrs. Nickerson, indeed, did not have a piano at her home, and I thought that she might like to practice on our piano, but for some reason she never wanted to play again. That surprised me, but I was surely glad to be the recipient of such an eclectic array of music to broaden my education in the music world.

Having a piano in our music room was nice because when family came over, everyone would gather there. My parents, aunts, and uncles would sit or stand around the piano and sing while my cousin Goldie played. Goldie knew how to read music and could play by ear, so she was able to play all of the old Baptist hymns and Negro spirituals that our aunts and uncles requested. My father's favorite songs were "Nearer My God to Thee" and "Rock of Ages." I learned many of those spirituals and hymns by participating in the family's festive sing-alongs.

My dad and mom always tried to protect my brother and me from the hurt and prejudice in the world. One of my favorite places to go was "down the country." "Down the country" was the wide open rolling hills of Clifford in Amherst County, Virginia where Grandma, and Pop Tom, my father's parents, lived. We went there at least four or five times a year.

One warm summer day when I was eleven, my mom said that daddy was on vacation from work and that we were going down the country for a week. I was so tickled. Our family began our usual "Going down the country" preparations. Everyone went into action the day before the trip: Mom started washing, ironing, and packing our clothes. She cooked up all the foods for our car trip which would make our four hour journey seem like a long, fun-filled car picnic. Dad took the car to the service station where the attendant filled it with gas, washed the windows, and checked the oil and the tires. Bill and I gathered the toys, games, and books that we wanted to take.

The next day, as soon as mom asked her customary query, "For the last time, has everyone been to the bathroom?" we got into our new pink Le Sabre Buick and our road picnic started.

From the back seat began the litany from Bill and me: "Mom, pass me some fried chicken."

"May I have some lemonade? I want a hard-boiled egg, too."

"What kind of cake did you make?"

"Anita and Bill, we're not even out of Washington yet," kidded Daddy.

"That's okay, Les," Mom laughed, "I have plenty. Would you like some fruit?"

Dad then gave in to the fun and joined the picnic as he said, "Peel me an egg, somebody." My dad loved to sing and would begin, "We're on our way to grandmother's house, to grandmother's house we go..." After everyone repeated the chorus and the main verse that dad sang, we each had to make up our own verse to add to the song. Along the way we did this often to various tunes.

The trip to my grandparents' house was fun because our family liked traveling together. We spent some of our time reading books and comics that we brought along. We also told stories, jokes and riddles. Then Mom started a car game which Bill and I knew and enjoyed during our south bound trip. "Who can be the first one to find a horse?" We played various games as we looked for other sites, road signs, and tags from different states.

Then it came. "I have to go to the bathroom, Daddy," I whined.

"Just hold it a little while," Daddy pleaded.

"I can't, Daddy. I have to go now."

The games, the songs, the food, the family all

had surrounded, comforted, and protected me so that I never realized what evils lurked outside the doors of our Le Sabre. I didn't know that there might be some gas stations along this road that wouldn't let me use the restroom or would make me use a separate outhouse bathroom marked "Colored" just because I was black. I wasn't aware that the reason my family was enjoying a car picnic was because there were no restaurants in which our family would be accepted to eat. I didn't realize that my parents had lived through the humiliation of rejection, the torment of being kicked out, and the repression of opportunity only to vow that their children would not ever have to feel that pain. So they built a one-way mirrored wall around the world in which Bill and I grew up. Others could see us, but at that time, Bill and I did not see the real world as it was.

Whenever I was down the country I would try to get up early enough each morning to help my grandfather, Pop Tom. Pop Tom was a tall, thin, quiet man whose ancient brownish-blue eyes and lines of creases on his dark skinned face spoke of gentleness in their silence. He talked very little but loved to show his grandchildren how to do things on the farm, like milk a cow, feed the pigs, or round up the animals. He also pointed out things in nature, like the clouds preparing for a storm. One time when I was

walking next to Pop Tom, he reached down among a patch of clover to pick up a four leaf clover which he handed to me and said, "You don't see these often. Keep this for good luck."

Pop Tom was a farmer who had also volunteered as a Sunday school teacher, and he was well respected in the community. He usually wore a tan, long-sleeved buttoned-down cotton shirt neatly starched and pressed under his blue denim coveralls. Inside a pocket in the top of his coveralls, he would pull out his pocket watch which was on a long chain. He used this watch to tell the precise time for some things, but many things on the farm operated according to the order of natural time. Pop Tom loved to sit on the porch and read the newspaper after he had finished his morning work. He always seemed happy or content, especially when family was around.

Grandma was more talkative that Pop Tom. This tall, thin, gray-haired woman, who usually wore aprons over her house dresses, loved to relate information about her life and her family. She also told ghost stories, but she said that these were not stories because they really happened. Grandma and Pop Tom had a beautifully loving relationship that displayed their true partnership. They worked in harmony taking care of their family and their farm,

and they understood each other. Because Grandma was more talkative and Pop Tom quieter, Grandma had a funny way of dominating the conversation. Often when Pop Tom began to say something, Grandma would cut him off saying, "Shut up, Tom. You don't know what you are talking about." Then Pop Tom would get quiet again.

Being in the country we were surrounded by nature. We were accustomed to many animals but some seemed a tad more dangerous than others. One time when we were down the country, my cousins, my brother and I were coming from Mrs. Nash's store with bags of items that we had bought. As we cut across the huge front yard from the driveway and headed to the front porch, I started to pick up a stick that was lying on the grass.

Suddenly Grandma shouted, "Don't move. It' a snake."

For us children, the words, "Don't move" and "It's a snake" didn't seem to logically go together so we began running toward the front porch. By the time we got there, Grandma had picked up her shotgun from behind the door and was aiming at the snake. She fired and hit it. After that, I looked very carefully everywhere I stepped and scrutinized deeply before picking up anything.

When Bill and I were down the country we enjoyed great fun with our cousins. Some of my cousins spent much of their summer with Grandma and Pop Tom. Barbara and Donna, who were children of my father's brother Robbie, as well as Andre and Roger, who were children of my father's sister Alma, went down the country as soon as summer break began and stayed until it was time to go back to school in September. Other cousins, like Pam and Sarita, children of my father's sister Edith and his niece Goldie, also stayed down our grandparents' farm quite often. Our cousin, Evelyn, whom we called "Sis" and who was the daughter of my father's sister Rose, lived on another farm in Amherst County not too far from Grandma and Pop Tom.

On special occasions many of my aunts and uncles and their children would gather at my grandparents' large homestead. There was unending merriment being with all of my family. We children had enough space to run freely and yet feel protected. Two of my uncles, James (whom we called Duck) and John Christian, did not have children of their own, but we children loved being around them. Sometimes when we had been around my Uncle John for a while, he would endearingly say, "You varmints, get away from here!" Still, we would stay right up under him.

One evening before bedtime when my cousins, Barbara and Donna, were down the country we three girls asked Pop Tom to wake us up when he got up so we could go to the barn with him the next morning. That night, like so many nights down the country, we girls slept together in "Alma's room," the bedroom just below Grandma and Pop Tom's bedroom.

Although my grandparents' white clapboard center-hall designed antebellum house had seven comfortable bedrooms, it always seemed to me a little eerie sleeping there at night. Some parts of this one-hundred-year-old house even seemed spooky during the daytime. At night, though, I never wanted to sleep alone. Lying in bed, my mind carefully traced a path through that house full of mystery. Hardly any guest used the front doorway to enter the house. The family used the front porch only to sit and talk, rock and read, or swing and play. This front door opened to a large hallway where an old, out-of-tune upright piano sat nestled below the wide front staircase to the second floor. To the right of this hallway and staircase was a bedroom which was seldom used or even entered. This room had a fireplace and another door that led to the back porch. To the left side of the hall was the living room. Although the living room looked comfortable with lace arm sleeves on the velvet sofa and glass-top wooden tables, no one ever

sat in the living room. The one piece of furniture that I cherished the most was in the living room, and I came there often to play that pump organ. At the end of the hallway were the glass French doors that led to the dining room. The dining room was the heart of the house. This was the room where the family gathered in the evenings to read, play games, practice multiplication and long division problems, and socialize. The television was in the corner of this room between the china cabinet and a long chaise lounge sofa. Pop Tom's rocking chair and another chair sat on each side of the oil heater. Grandma's sewing machine was against the wall between the two highboys, and the large dining room table sat in the middle of the floor. It was in this dining room that we often sat and told stories. It was also here where we had to "be still" whenever it stormed. When lightning started, my grandma would say," Come in the room. Just be still and pray while the Lord is doing his work."

In addition to the French doors from the hallway, this dining room had three other doors. One, which was never opened, led to a screened-in side porch. Another led to the kitchen, and the third led to a screened-in back porch. This porch was an extension of the dining room and the kitchen during the summer because it was used for eating as well as

other activities. It was on this porch that my father or his brothers shaved Pop Tom and cut hair. It was also on this porch that Grandma snapped beans, hulled peas, shucked corn, pared potatoes, or washed clothes with her homemade soap. Family sat there and talked, and we ate many meals there, sitting at the metal table on red ice cream parlor chairs. Hidden below the table on the porch was a pull-up trap door in the floor which led to the unlit, musty, dirt-floor cellar. I had never ventured any farther down into the blackness of the cellar than a few feet along the red clay ramp. I had often peered as far as I could see into those cold, dark rooms which had been a store house for foods long before refrigeration. I wondered what else they could have housed. Even though I wondered, I had been too afraid to go beyond the cobwebs into the low ceiling chambers below.

Above the cellar's trap door, the porch was also the main entrance by which most people visited my grandparents' house. During the warm weather this porch, which led not only to the dining room but also in to the kitchen and the first floor bedroom, was the hub of the daytime as the dining room was the hub of the evenings. The final door from the dining room led into the kitchen. The kitchen seemed lightly crowded, but always warm. The main piece in the kitchen was the old stove. Grandma would get up

first thing in the morning and put wood into this big black cast iron stove. This stove would cook food and keep us warm in the winter. Throughout the day we threw pieces of trash and wood into it to keep the fire going, and that fire usually lasted until nighttime. Grandma's kitchen also had an electric stove, refrigerator, cupboard, sink, and cabinets. The kitchen table was in the middle of the floor, but Grandma's chair sat behind the wood burning stove, just at the entrance to the back porch. The pantry off from this kitchen had shelves full of canned foods from top to bottom. It also had a separator for the cow's milk that Pop Tom brought back from the barn twice a day. The door opposite the back porch led to a back hallway which contained the back stairs. Just below the stairs was a bathroom that my father and his brothers had just added to the house. This bathroom faced a door to the side porch. This side porch also had tables and chairs, though it was seldom used, except for storing things. This porch had baskets of fruits, tomatoes, and potatoes that had been gathered. They were ready for eating, canning, or baking. Out there were hundreds of eggs from the hens, and lots of sodas, especially Pop Tom's favorite—RC Cola. Although this porch also had doors that led to the dining room and the living room, they were never opened.

The back stairs led to bedrooms above: Goldie's room, Ed's room, Alma's room, and Robbie's room. My grandparents' bedroom, Grandma's darkroom and the front room were all directly off the large upper front hallway, up from which the wide front stairway reached. The railing for this main stairway ran down the hall so that the downstairs hallway and front door could be seen by looking over the railing. Opposite the main stairway railing along this long, wide front hallway sat an armoire and a high dresser full of sheets and quilts that Grandma had made. On the wall was a massive foreboding plaque in a frame with the names of the family members who had died in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Looking at this memorial as I walked down the hall rather frightened me. A vanity sat just outside Grandma's room. This upstairs main hallway was usually quite bright because at its front end was a glass door which opened to a small balcony. At the top of the stairs was the upstairs bathroom, which my father and Uncle John had designed. It was to the right of the stairs next to the darkroom.

The darkroom was Grandma's private haven. She dressed there. There she stored canned foods which she would eat and give away to anyone who visited her. She kept trunks of material for sewing there. Sometimes when she was tired, she just went

there and sat. It was Grandma's room, but she could have it. No child in our extended family wanted to go into the darkroom alone. There were no light switches on the wall of the darkroom, only a pull-down string to a bulb in the ceiling which was too high for most of us to reach. There were no windows to the outside in the darkroom. There was only mystery in this dimly lit room at the top of the stairs with its many boxes and shelves.

Grandma and Pop Tom had the bedroom at the other end of the main hallway. It was cozy and warm. Grandma kept plenty of wood next to her pot belly stove. Facing the front entrance to their room, near Grandma's sewing machine was a small cot. Any child who was afraid in the night could sleep on the cot in our grandparents' room. On the dresser was a mantle clock that Grandma said stopped running the day her son Ed died. Even though it did not work, Grandma kept it sitting on her dresser. Next to the pot belly stove were a rocking chair and a trunk in which Grandma kept letters, important papers, pictures of family and friends, and some quilting material.

Three steps down from Grandma's room was Alma's room, the small bedroom where Barbara, Donna, and I were supposed to be sleeping. We all cuddled together in that big bed in the room between

the warm friendliness of Grandma's room and that lonely memorial to my dead uncle, Ed's room. I didn't like to look at the door to Ed's room, and I surely hated the fact that if I came up the back stairway I had to walk quickly through Ed's room to get to Alma's room. Sometimes if I came up the back stairway, I would walk all the way through the rooms on the right side of the house, come down the main hallway and through Grandma's room into Alma's room, rather than go through Ed's room. But here I lay between my two cousins, telling jokes and stories for hours.

Every half hour or so one of us would say, "Sh.., stop talking so I can get some sleep," but the other two would tell another joke, and so on we continued until only the crickets in the dark could be heard. Then the brightness of sunlight awakened me, and the smell of fried bacon and country ham let me know that it was too late. Again I had missed him. Pop Tom had already left for the barn hours ago.

At my grandparents' house, there were two large metal swings. One hung from a limb on the tree in the back yard. It was next to the well house where the family would gather to sit and talk during the summer. The other swing hung from the ceiling on the right edge of the large wooden front porch. These

swings were designed to fit two people or possibly three children, but we would pile into them like they could hold the world. One hot summer day my mother was sitting in the swing with Bill in her lap. I climbed in next to her with Donna and Barbara holding Sarita beside me. On the other side of my mother were Pam and Roger. At first we just glided back and forth. Then we pushed the swing higher so that as the swing rose from the porch into the air our feet dangled about 5 feet over the yard where big metal buckets full of rain water that Grandma kept for washing clothes sat atop a pile of stones. Higher and higher we soared with the light breeze brushing against our faces as we swung back and forth. We children filled the air with laughter, talking, and singing as the swing went even higher. We giggled, we laughed, we screamed, "Whoopee!" as we tried to capture small pockets of wind on that hot, muggy, summer day. I could faintly hear the strained swing respond with a "screech, "crack," "screech," "crack," but that sound from above my head was almost drowned out by the laughter and song. "Screech, "crack," "screech," "crack."

My mother said, "Hold on so you don't fall out." Just as she finished her sentence and we were out over the yard, SNAP, the right end of the chain broke from the ceiling and the swing dangled on only

one chain at a slanted angle. Crash! Even as we scrambled to hold on, everyone began sliding off the swing. Some landed in the grass while others hit the rocks or the side of the porch. It was quite scary as we landed from our joy ride but at least no one was seriously hurt.

Perhaps all of those funny, exciting, and painful experiences during my family trips down the country and to Atlantic City broadened my understanding of the world. Venturing forward, though, was always with the support and protection of my extended family.

4 MEASURE FROM THEN TO WHEN

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

I looked at the beautiful quilt that my grandma was making and thought how agile her hands seemed for a lady of 92 years. It was November 6, 1983, and my father's mother, Genorah Broady Christian, was sitting in her bedroom in the house of her daughter Edith. Around her were some of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. It was here that she sat and each day worked diligently sewing together pieces for her quilt by hand. Grandma was always making something to give away to her family members. Everyone loved her quilts. Her quilts were made from scraps of cloth that had been the fabrics of her long life. Grandma had once said that it was important to spread love around. I knew that my grandmother was spreading around her love with each quilt that she gave away. She was weaving her own fabrics of life.

"What was it like when you were younger, Grandma?" I asked.

"Child," Grandma began talking as she worked, "times were always changing."

Grandma loved to talk and cherished telling her story, so she gave a slight chuckle and began.



Genorah Broady Christian:

I was born in a small wooden farmhouse in Amherst County, Virginia, on June 12, 1891. Around that time, many babies died of the flu and other

natural diseases. My parents had already lost one son, Lester, at the age of three, another at the age of seven, and a daughter during childbirth. These children were buried in the family plot behind our home. However, I, the eighth child, was a healthy baby who survived and grew.

My mother, Elena Jones Broady, and my father, Hiram Broady, married during the Reconstruction Period when hopes for the "negras" were high. After slavery, they were very proud to own their own farm and they instilled this pride of ownership and independence into all of their children: Marcellus, Milton, George, Hiram, Wade, Florence, Rose, Alma, and me—Genorah. My father often said that the most important thing for a person to have was "a piece of land" because with this land you could provide for yourself and your family.

My father's name was Hiram Broady, but we children called him Pap. Pap was an active man who told me stories about his life. He said when he was a child his parents lived and worked on the Claybourn Plantation. He was close to his sisters—Callie, Nannie, Florence, and Julia—and listened to his father, Milton Broady. He told me that at the age of twelve he carried dispatch during the Civil War.

My mother, Elena, also told me about life as a

slave on the plantation. She said that she had cleaned and washed clothes as a child in the Maize's family house on the Maize Plantation. My mother said that she was eight years old when Lee surrendered. She told me about the day when a man rode into the yard and started talking to Missus Maize. Some of the slaves heard the man say the war was over and that Lee had surrendered. They were so excited that they started spreading the news to the other slaves and boy did those negras start shouting and jumping for joy.

They were shouting, "Halleluiah! We's free!" They kept whooping it up all that night, except of course when Missus Maize came round them. Then they quietly said to her, "Oh, Miz Maise, I don't know what we's gonna do." But when she left them they began dancing again and shouting, "We's free! We's free!"

Our family lived in the New Glasgow area of Amherst County where the Broady School and the Broady Cemetery were located. We knew many people in our area and we enjoyed gathering at church. Growing up on a farm, my family usually walked to most places. This was common not only for my family but also for many of the other families in our community. Even in the early 1900's as automobiles were being marketed, there were few

seen 'round our way. On Sundays, many people walked to church. Some families, though, would pile into horse drawn wagons or buggies and go to church. Others rode horses and tied them to limbs of the trees. Our family went to St. Peter's Baptist Church where I was baptized at an early age. Our church was not only the center of our spiritual gathering but also the center of our social network. All of the families that worshiped at St. Peter's were part of our community. Revival Time was quite special because there were services every night of the week. Many came to St. Peter's Baptist Church for revival carrying lanterns as they traveled in the dark. It was beautiful seeing those sparkling lights up and down the road as the wagons and walkers made their way home. What a glowing pathway the Lord did shine!

Back at home on Pap's farm we use to sit a spell on the front porch every evening. I was close to many family members on my father's farm. Aunts, uncles, and cousins lived nearby. My family would sit on the porch and relax after a long day. Adults would talk about news and things that they saw, heard or experienced that day. Everyone used to share information or tell stories. People did have stories because many strange things happened around us. Our house was right down the road from our families' school and cemetery. The Broady School was closer

to us, but the Broady Cemetery was actually at the far end of the road past land and homes that belonged to various members' of our extended family. From our porch we could see people as they went down the road to and from the cemetery. Who knows how many people were actually buried there! Since at least the early 1800's, before our family had the land and began maintaining the cemetery, a portion of it had been a slave cemetery. I remember one evening at dusk while we were sitting on the porch, we saw a man riding his horse down the road from the cemetery. It was a little odd because we had not seen him go toward the cemetery earlier. He rode right by our house and we strained to see who he was. When he got in front of our door, everyone on that porch was shocked because the man had no head. I stood up to look closer but the man and his horse immediately disappeared. Later I wondered if what I saw was real, or whether it was a dream mixed with one of those family stories.

My sisters, my brothers, and I learned to read and write at our school, the Broady School. Since members of my father's family all had adjoining land in our area, I grew up with my cousins. Some of the family land was set aside for a school, so my uncle erected a school not only for my family but for all of the negra children in our area. The school was called

The Broady School. We walked to our school each day, and in one room the teacher taught us reading, writing, and arithmetic. There was only one teacher at the school, and she taught everyone. I started school when I was seven, and I went to school until I learned to read and write well. We all learned to read and write. We also learned how to figure up just about anything. My sisters and I went to school more often and for a greater number of years because most of the others had to work on the farm during planting and harvesting seasons. At about the age of thirteen, it was time for them to look for work. Working and being self-supporting was the main goal for every child in our family. Children really grew up early in those days.

As I grew, so too did the world around me. Soon after the turn of the century, I met James Thomas Christian from Turkey Mountain in Amherst County, and in 1909 I married him. Tom was a tobacco farmer and the son of a horse trader and sorghum maker. His father, Nicholas Christian, was a deacon at St. Peter's Church, and was well recognized as the best sorghum syrup maker in the area.

After we married and before my first child was born, my younger sister Alma went to Atlantic City, New Jersey, to work for the James family. My

brother Wade went to Buffalo, New York, because he heard that our people could get jobs up north. My brother Marcellus went to Washington, DC, and my sister Rose went to Chicago. I stayed in Amherst County with my husband Tom.

Tom and I lived on a farm that was part of the Broady land which my sister, Florence Peters, had. For many years, Tom and I lived there, even after Pap left and went to Washington to work. It was in Washington that my Pap, Hiram Broady, died in 1926. Tom grew tobacco and corn. He planted a peach orchard, an apple orchard, and many other fruit trees. He also raised cows for milking and hogs for pork. His horses were used for working and pulling the wagon. Neither Tom nor I ever learned to drive a car. While my husband was working hard in the fields and on his job as custodian for an all-white school near our farm, I planted, tended, and picked my large garden of potatoes, sweet potatoes, greens beans, collard greens, mustard greens, cabbage, squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, and other fruits and vegetables. I canned many goods and always had food for my family and enough to give to friends, family or anyone else who needed it.

It was the way of our people in those days to always share with one another. In fact, if anyone

came to our house, we never let them go home without feeding them or giving them at least a jar of goods, some fruit, a quilt, or something. We always shared with others. One day a white man came up to the house. I didn't know who he was or what he wanted, but I went outside. He asked for a drink of water, so I walked over to the well and fetched him a cup of water, but when I turned around he had disappeared.

Tom and I had nine children whom we raised here in Amherst County. They were all born while we were living in that three bedroom home which we called The Peters House. Our children grew up happy and active. They were good children and always looked out for one another. Our first born, William Lester Christian, was born on April 28, 1910. He, and most of the other children, went to the Broady School that I had attended. We continued to live on that farm surrounded by family long after Pap had died and Ma had gone to live in Atlantic City with my sister, Alma.

By August, 1942, Tom and I had moved to our own seven bedroom colonial farmhouse on over 100 acres of land in the Clifford section of Amherst County. This house had been an historical manor called Camperdown, which had last been owned by the Maxwell family. The house, which was built in

the early 1800's, had been vacant for a while and needed some work, but we were able to buy it. Two of our children, Les and Edith, put the down payment on the house and sent money each month to help with the mortgage. At that time, Les was living in Washington and Edith was living in Atlantic City. This big, wood-framed estate took a lot of effort and toil to get it into shape because it was quite old, but all of my children pitched in and worked on the house. They not only fixed it up before we moved in but also kept painting, replacing the roof, and updating the house throughout the many years that we lived there.

When Tom and I moved to Clifford, we were not far from Turkey Mountain, St. Peter's Church, our old home, and family. Tom's sister, Mary, and his father were still living in Turkey Mountain. My cousin, Edna, married Tom's nephew, Odell, and they lived in Buffalo Hill, which was a close-by area of Amherst County. The main section of the little town of Clifford was up the road from our house. There Mr. and Mrs. Nash lived over top of their first floor general store. Mrs. Nash also ran the Clifford Post Office in a small section of that store. Next to the Nash store lived the Shraders. Family members lived in the next few houses down that road, and another cousin, Ruffus Edwards, had a gas station with a windmill on top. There was Cousin Harriet's two-

story house. Then go down four houses and around the corner, and I would be right back at the house where I grew up.

On our farm, Tom kept horses, cows, and hogs, and I raised the chickens. Every morning Tom would get up at about 5:30 and walk down the path to the barn pulling a little red wagon. He would then begin milking the cows by hand, one at a time. These cows sometimes got impatient waiting for their heavy sacks of milk to be drained. Tom would sit on a stool in the barn with his bucket on the floor between his legs and rhythmically squeeze and pull each tit of the cow until the utter could give no more. Each cow would give about a bucket of milk. Tom usually kept about four cows and a bull.

After the cows were milked, Tom would take some of the corn that he had piled in the barn and put the corn in the corn shucker. When he turned the heavy metal handle of the shucker with one hand and pushed the corn through with the other hand, the corn would twist around, and the kernels would fall off the cob into the waiting buckets on the floor. When a few buckets were full, Tom took one bucket of corn to the pig pen, which was near the barn. He also took a bucket of milk and poured it into the trough with the corn for the pigs. This was the daily slop for the pigs,

but they also ate scraps of food, fruits, or vegetables in the evenings. Then Tom pitched hay for the horses to eat before he left the barnyard. Blocks of hay were always stacked up in the barn and in the barnyard. Tom then took the cows down a path behind the barn into the pasture by a stream to graze. Finally, Tom loaded the buckets of milk and corn onto the wagon and brought them down the path toward our house. He left buckets of corn near the hen house and brought the milk to me at the house.

Soon after Tom left to go to the barn in the morning, I got up and began my work. I chopped some wood to make a fire in the stoves. The kitchen stove always needed wood, both summer and winter, in order to cook the food. The other stoves and fireplaces around the house needed wood only when it was cold in order to heat the rooms. But it was good to always keep piles of chopped wood handy. Anyway, I would start the kitchen stove by putting some logs inside and lighting them. This was the best cooking stove. I lifted the lid top on the left side of the black cast iron stove to put in the wood and paper. Then with the long wood matches that I kept by the stove, I started a flame. We threw paper, trash, or pieces of wood into the stove throughout the day. The stove got rid of trash when we used it as fuel. Then I would make biscuits from the sack of flour that I kept

in the pantry. I put the biscuits into one of the two ovens below. I also cooked slices of ham or bacon, some fried potatoes with onions, some eggs, and some cut-up apples on the top of the stove. Over the stove near the top of the flue was a compartment that kept the food warm. It looked like the top ovens of today. The heat went up the flue and also kept foods warm in this section. I would keep foods that I had cooked heated in the warmer. After breakfast, I went to feed the chickens some corn and collect the eggs. Afterwards, I went back into the garden and began gathering beans and greens. When Tom came back with the buckets of milk, I poured the milk through the separator. This separated the milk from the cream. We kept some of the milk and cream. Then some of the cream was poured into the churn where I churned it into butter. Some of the milk was sold. Two days a week, I collected, washed, ironed, and returned the clothes of a few people in the community. All of the work on the farm was done by hand in the early forties. We did not have inside plumbing or central heating. All of our children helped keep this farm going. The older children who were away sent money, and the younger children who were home helped with all of the physical work to keep the place in good condition. Our tobacco farm began to flourish by the mid 1940's, and by the end of the decade we

were hiring workers during the spring and summer to help work those 100 acres of cash crop.

Although Tom and I had nine children, by the 1940's when we were living in our new farmhouse, the only children home were James, whom we called Duck; Robbie and Ed, the twins; Alma, the baby; and Goldie, Edith's daughter. Les, our oldest, was the first to leave home. He moved to Washington, DC, to live with my sister-in-law, Margaret, who was my brother Marcellus's wife. Marcellus died in January of 1929, but he had a son, James Broady, who was Les's age. James was more than a cousin to Les. He was like a brother to him. Les went to work in Washington and later began going to a trade school there. His first job was at Woodward & Lothrop store as a stock clerk. Eventually, he got a good job in the government and opened up a barber shop with another cousin. My oldest daughter Elizabeth and my daughter Edith moved to Atlantic City where my sister Alma lived. My daughter Rose married McKinley Vaughan, who owned a large farm in Amherst County. Les, as the oldest child, knew what his responsibilities were to his family. He began to be a support for some of his brothers and sisters back home. A few years later, after Les got married to Evelyn Shaw of Washington, DC, my son John went to Washington and lived with Les. Our family was

moving away, but they were still close in many respects. We knew that each person in the family had the responsibility to help others. We made it because brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins provided that family support. My brothers, sisters, in-laws, sons, daughters, and their spouses opened the doors of their homes for family members to live until they got on their feet, obtained jobs and were able to help other family members.

Thank You to a Friend

Each man is placed in this world

To do his deed and die,

But yours is special just for me.

It helps each day pass by.

I can't explain the strength you give.

Or tender love I feel.

I cannot show my thankfulness

To you who've helped me deal

With life and love

And good and bad

And happiness and grief

I've learned a lot from friendship

And in it I've great belief.

5 MAKING THE CUT

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

Most of my family and neighbors loved sports, but I was never really into any of those games. My father had two season tickets to the Redskins football games and went to those games with his brothers, his friends or my brother, Bill. When they didn't attend, they would enjoy watching the games on television. My brother had a baseball glove and played baseball, but I didn't want to play that game with him. I guess I never was good at it and I didn't have the desire to practice so that I could get better. In the neighborhood the boys would play football in the street. Sometimes boys and girls began kickball or dodge ball games, but I was not enthusiastic about playing. I often made up excuses so that I didn't have to play. At times when I played I made outs in kickball or got tagged out in dodge ball. I really wasn't comfortable with sports at all.

Down the country, when my whole family gathered, baseball was the game of the evening. Everyone in the family who wanted to play would gather on the huge front yard and form teams. Other family members watched from the rocking chairs, wicker arm chairs, the swing, or on the concrete steps

of the front porch. My cousins, aunts, and uncles from the very young to the older played the game, and many, including my brother, used their own special gloves that they had broken in. Even though I didn't really like playing, I occasionally played with them. The game did bring everyone together in a fun way.

My father's sister, Aunt Alma, was married to her childhood boyfriend, John McDaniel, from Amherst County. John's family in Virginia had a farm, and a section of their land was set aside for an actual baseball diamond. Teams of people from the community came there to play ball. One day I rode to their farm with my aunt and uncle, and I thought it was interesting seeing the people play in that field with the dusty red dirt flying as people slid onto base. I could see that the family was quite enthusiastic about the game.

In DC, The Washington Senators, our hometown baseball team, had moved into a new stadium near where Uncle John and Aunt Alma lived. One day my father left Bill and me with my aunt and uncle and I was pleased to be there with my cousins, Andre and Roger. That afternoon Aunt Alma said, "We're going to the baseball game." I had never been to a real baseball game before. In fact, I had never attended any professional sports game before. Back

then with no seat belt laws or car seats, drivers could pile as many people as they could fit into a car. That day my uncle fit in quite a few. After Aunt Alma, Andre, Roger, Bill and I climbed into the car, Uncle John picked up our cousins, Pam and Sarita, who lived nearby. Then we went to the new DC Stadium. I didn't know much about the game, but I was fascinated with the stadium. It was a huge round structure with no roof and seemed very open-aired. Where we sat, there were long rows of steel bleachers tiered on a concrete floor, and we could see everything—the field, the sky, and lots of vacant seats going around the stadium. There were many empty seats in our section also. In fact after my aunt and uncle sat down, most of us kids moved from one seat to another. We tried out seats from the top to the bottom. Men came around and yelled, "Hot dogs," "Popcorn," or "Soda!" We got them all. I wasn't really keeping up with the game, but when people cheered, I cheered. When people stomped their feet, I stomped. The sounds roared loudly and echoed. The stadium shook and rocked. This was the first time that I got excited about a ballgame, and I really thanked my Aunt Alma and Uncle John for that experience. Even though ball games were not one of my passions, because of the enthusiasm and love that my family had for those games, I learned to

understand and appreciate sports.

Growing up in my neighborhood during the late 1950's and early 1960's I had a lot of freedom and some definite structure. I could go outside and play all day without anyone worrying about me. If my mother needed me to come in for some reason, she had a bell that she rang. It was this bell that she used to call the family to dinner whether we were outside or in the house. During the summer I'd ride my bicycle with other children in the area. Since few cars came down the streets of our neighborhood, we rode in the streets. We would ride around the corner and pick up other children until there was a whole group of us. Sometimes we went to someone's backyard to play a game. Sometimes someone would start a kickball or dodge ball game in the street, and everyone would begin playing. Many times we would jump rope. At times we planned special activities. About three years straight we organized and put on a neighborhood carnival to raise money for muscular dystrophy. We spent days deciding on the food and creating games, activities, and even a ride, using a wheeled office chair in my friend's basement. Then we advertised our carnival with signs that we posted. The cost for admissions was twenty-five cents to play three games and go on the ride, but a hot dog with lemonade was another dime. Many times kids paid

extra because they wanted to play more games or ride in the rolling chair again. We were always proud of the money that we raised for Muscular Dystrophy from our neighborhood. How creative we were in finding ways to have fun each day! However, all of us knew that when the street lights came on, we had to go home immediately. That rule was understood and respected by all of us, so no matter what we were doing or playing when those lights came on, everyone stopped, picked up their bikes, balls, jump ropes, games, and headed home.

My three main hobbies were reading, writing, and playing the piano. I loved to sit quietly and read books. I could curl up with a good book and be lost in that book for hours. Mystery books were my favorite reading material, and I loved Nancy Drew books. My friend Stephanie and I began collecting the books in the Nancy Drew series. We were a part of the Nancy Drew book club, and each month a new book would come in the mail. Stephanie and I read each book and discussed all of them. Sometimes we found older Nancy Drew books at stores, and after reading them we would swap the books and share our ideas.

I also enjoyed writing for pleasure and communication. I would write in my diary, write poetry, and write to my grandmother. I received my

first diary when I was about ten or eleven and I began writing my ideas, my feelings, and the experiences that I had each day. When I wasn't down the country, my main form of communication with my grandmother was through writing. I would write letters to Grandma, and within a few days I would look forward to receiving a letter from her. I also began writing poetry in the eighth grade. At that time poetry became my favorite writing genre. Two short poems that I wrote in my diary during my eighth grade year were "A Sick Man" and "Thank You to a Friend."

Playing the piano sometimes made me feel like I had been transported to another time or place. I could sense the mood of the music and let it lift me or cause me to ponder. I truly loved music and it was a hobby that I could enjoy alone or with others. My mom and Aunt Hazel always requested certain songs so I would learn those songs to play for them. Sometimes they would sit and listen to me play or sing as I played one of their favorites. I don't think that I was particularly talented in music or that I had a natural gift, but I loved it and I practiced all of the time, so music became a part of me.

My father had already extended the living quarters of our house by making bedrooms and a TV

room on the second floor, but in 1963 when the kitchen was remodeled, our living quarters changed again. As the company brought in the new cabinets, sink, countertop, and appliances for our kitchen on the first floor, they moved the old cabinets, sink and appliances to the basement. When they finished, we then had two kitchens. Our new first floor kitchen was immaculate and quite modern with its Formica countertop and stainless steel sink. Coppertone appliances, including a countertop stove and a wall oven, looked beautiful with the spacious upper and base oak cabinets lining the walls in this newly paneled kitchen. The kitchen was so perfect that my mother decided not to use it, except on special occasions. Instead, she began cooking all of the meals in the basement kitchen. My father immediately finished the rest of the basement, adding ceilings and paneled walls. He proceeded to build rooms that he had already designed. Right next to the kitchen, he made one section into a huge comfortable sitting area with a sofa, chairs, a TV, and a Hi-Fi system. The bathroom was right by this area. He built bookshelves all along one section of a wall where he made my mother's study. On the other side of mom's study, he enclosed the furnace room. He partitioned off a laundry area with a washing machine, clothes lines, sewing machine, ironing board, iron, and a huge

presser. My father was the person who usually pressed the clothes with the presser, a machine about the size of an upright piano, with one roller on the top section and another at the bottom. When Daddy put each item of clothes or linen between the two rollers, pushed the top section down, and pressed the foot pedal, those rollers carried the clothes through and pressed them so that they looked professionally laundered. This machine was nice, but he thought it was a bit dangerous so he let me work it only while he was sitting next to me. Dad's tool room was right next to the laundry section. My family began spending most of our time in this basement. We ate there, we watched TV there, we played there, and we entertained friends there. The basement was where my parents had parties. Once we got out of bed and came downstairs, much of our time at home was in the basement. In this way, my mom was able to keep us out of the living room, dining room, and her new kitchen so that the first floor stayed pristine.

Although my brother delivered *The Washington Star* every day and my parents subscribed not only to that paper but also *The Washington Daily News*, I don't remember being that interested in the news when I was young and I never was very aware of the things going on outside of my little world until a few things happened which jolted me. Throughout

my years at St. Francis we had "Duck and Cover" drills because we were told that we could be attacked by the Russians with an atom bomb at any time. We students would get under our desks and cover our heads when the siren went off. Our school, like so many others, was a bomb shelter site with barrels of water and some food in the basement. Living in Washington, DC, we were instilled with the fear that war was just a push of the button away and that our city would be the first to receive a nuclear blast. This Cold War briefly reached its peak during the Cuban Missile Crisis but soon de-escalated as America and Russia, who both had enough nuclear bombs to destroy the world, negotiated in an acknowledged stalemate.

Another event occurred in August of 1963 when my father, who was the union president for his local at the Printing Office, went downtown to join Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s March on Washington. My mother seemed to be upset that he was going and talked about how there could be trouble. She said that she wouldn't let her children go down there. They'd stay at home with her where it was safe. While my father was gone, I heard my mom talk to someone on the phone about Martin Luther King being a revolutionist and that made me think about the men who fought the English for our country's

independence. When my father came back home that evening he excitedly told my mom about the events of that day and he was holding a sign that read, "Put an end to bias now." I didn't know what that meant and why he had a sign like that so I asked him. Dad said, "Everyone should be treated fair and equal. I want things to be better for you and Bill." I thought that was good and I didn't delve any further. I didn't even ask him about Martin Luther King, Jr.

In November of that same year while I was sitting in class at St. Francis de Sales, someone walked into the room and spoke to Sister Francis. She looked stunned when she turned to us, her students, and said, "The President has been shot. Let us pray." As we prayed the rosary my heart was pounding at the thought of someone shooting President Kennedy. My mind kept drifting from my prayers to mental pictures of the President. I remembered how my mom, my brother, and I had stayed awake to watch the victorious results of his election on television. I remembered words from his inaugural address that I had memorized, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." After we finished praying, I still felt dazed. It wasn't until I got home that I found out that President Kennedy had died.

One secret that I never told anyone was that I feared wetting myself. Bed wetting usually occurred while I was asleep, but a few times I had accidents in the daytime. Once when I was seven I was sitting in class and was afraid to ask to go to the bathroom. I tried to hold it, but it came out, and soon a trickle of water was dripping from my chair to the floor. That was very embarrassing for me, but I quickly learned to raise my hand and ask to be excused. When I was seven and eight years old—just after Nana died—I began wetting the bed many nights, even though my mom would get me up and take me to the bathroom. By the time I was thirteen, though, I was still sometimes wetting in bed. I would have many dry nights, and then it would happen again. I was trying not to drink anything in the evening and trying to get up at night and go to the bathroom. My problem was that sometimes I dreamed that I was getting up and walking to the bathroom, and then suddenly I would feel wet. For years I had been afraid to spend the night with friends because I did not want them to know that I wet the bed. My closest friend from birth Nina was the daughter of my parents' friends, Aunt Thelma and Uncle Jack. Bill and I often played with Nina and her brother Quentin (whom we called Quen). Although they did not live in our neighborhood, because our parents were close and in a

pinochle club together, Nina and Quen, who were each about a year older than Bill and I, became our very close friends. Nina often invited me to stay over for the night at her house or her beach house, and sometimes I would agree to stay; but often as nighttime approached I would sneak to a phone and call my parents to pick me up. Then during the summer while I was fourteen Mrs. Nickerson took me to Henderson, North Carolina, on the train to visit her cousin, Esther Mae. On my third night there I wet the bed. Here was another time that I was embarrassed because I was sleeping with Mrs. Nickerson; however, she did not make a fuss but rather had me take off all of the linens and wash them, as well as our pajamas. Before everyone else got up, we had also taken our baths. I learned to take responsibility for my accidents, and soon after that I had no more accidents.

In Catholic school I learned the commandments, my prayers (in English and Latin), and memorized answers to questions in the catechism, but I really knew very little about the Bible. The only part of the Bible that I somewhat knew was the 23rd Psalm because my mother said it often whenever I was frightened or upset. One summer when I was down the country, Uncle Wes, whose full name was John Wesley Bevan, opened my eyes to the beauty of reading the Bible. Many of our family members were

sitting on my grandparents' back porch and in the back yard. Uncle Wes began quoting verses from the Bible and he asked me what the verses meant to me. I said, "I don't know." I was not use to anyone quoting the Bible in a discussion, and I had never thought about what passages meant. Then he told me to read certain chapters and verses and we could discuss it the next day. That evening was the first time that I picked up the Bible and began reading it. I became hungry enough to read more and more sections of the Bible each day, and I thought deeply about the meaning of each passage.

Moving from a grade school that I had attended since age four to a high school was quite a process, and I knew that I needed to make the cut. When I was in eighth grade, I took the Archdiocesan High School Entrance Exam and chose a high school that I wanted to attend. All of my friends were choosing different schools, so we knew that we soon would be separated. I chose The Academy of Notre Dame and was accepted there. My first year at Notre Dame was full of new experiences. My school was old and majestic with a large bell in the tower high over the front entrance. On the first day, I was assigned my freshman homeroom and locker. My homeroom teacher, Sister Elizabeth Charles, was warm and friendly. I discovered that she would also

be my Latin teacher. Only one girl, Collette Elliott from my eighth grade class, came to Notre Dame with me, and she was in another homeroom, so I was open to meet new people. When I put my books in my locker I met two new friends: Patti's locker was right next to mine and Gwen's locker was right across from mine, so we talked. I soon met Martha, Lynn, and Jeanne, and we became instant friends. Being in an all-girls school was nice because there was no competition or rivalry, and I felt close to everyone. I received a schedule with the days, times, room numbers, and teachers for Algebra, English, Latin, Spanish, Religion, Biology, History, Art, Music, and Physical Education. This ninth grade year was my first venture in moving to different classes upstairs and down throughout this grand building. I met many other friends that year and joined the school's glee club. When Notre Dame's glee club had a concert with a boys' school, Archbishop Carroll, I tried out and was given the opportunity to play the piano for some of the songs.

Lunchtime was special because we had modern Mackie machines in our lunchroom. When we went down the basement to the lunchroom, we could buy foods like hamburgers, hot dogs, cakes, cookies, or soup from the machine. We could press a button to order the food and press a button to heat

food. This self-service lunchroom seemed quite modern.

That first year I learned the rules of the school, and the most important rule was not to pass over the line where our girls' school ended. Notre Dame and Gonzaga High School for Boys were adjacent to each other. They were actually in the same building but with a "no pass" hallway separating them. With all that there was to learn and do, high school was definitely expanding my world.

During the summer between my freshman and sophomore years Collette found some business books, and she and I studied typing and a little shorthand on our own. Every day I would go to Collette's house and we would practice our skills, trying to get faster and more competent each day. We thought that the shorthand would help in taking notes in school, and we knew that the typing would be needed to complete the papers that were being assigned to us. Another friend named Shelly often joined us, and after we finished our lessons we also practiced the newest dances. We all had many 45's that we brought to put on Collette's record player. Sometimes we would pretend to be a girls' group and choreograph a routine as we sang and danced.

Notre Dame hosted dances and sent flyers to

the Catholic boys' schools inviting them to attend. I had never been to a dance before, and I really didn't think about going to one during my freshman year because I thought that it might be a bit out of my league; but by the end of my sophomore year I wanted to attend a dance. The day of the dance, though, I was so nervous I thought that perhaps I shouldn't go. I put on the new yellow dress with thin straps across the shoulders and a skirt that flared when I turned. I uneasily questioned mom, "Suppose no one asks me to dance?"

Mom stood behind me with her hand on my arm as I faced the full length wall mirror in my room and calmly replied, "It will be okay. I'm sure you'll have fun and I bet someone will ask you to dance."

This would be my first dance and I was scared. Although my heart was beating frantically trying to say, "Don't go," my mother's eyes were pleading as she said, "Just go and try it." So I did.

Mom had already asked a friend of hers if her son could go to the dance with me. I didn't know him and he didn't know me. I sat quietly in the car next to daddy and looked down at my patent leather shoes as he got in the back seat behind me. "What did he say his name was?" I thought. I didn't really care. Who was he anyway? I was in tenth grade and he was in

the ninth grade at Archbishop Carroll. Would other students at his school or mine know that my mom had to set me up with a date, a boy younger than I? How embarrassing that would be! Dad was pulling up to the entrance of my school. "You two have a good time," he said. I'll be back here to pick you up at 10:30." My heart was pounding in my throat as I stepped from the car. This unknown boy and I walked into the gym of the school where the lights were low and rotating colors sparkled on the dance floor and walls. The music blasted as crowds of dancers filled the floor. I turned around to look for that mystery boy, but he had vanished, meshed into the throngs of people twisting, turning, holding hands, moving feet, swinging bodies, and belonging to that place where I definitely didn't belong. As I stood by the wall close to the gym door, I peered through the darkness looking for at least one of my friends from this school. It seemed like eternity that I stood there hoping that10:30 would come. Then lo and behold, a tall slightly chubby boy with curly hair put out his hand to mine and asked, "Do you want to dance?'

I said, "All right."

A slow song was playing, and this boy pulled me close to his crisp white shirt as one of his arms of this tweed sports jacket touched my shoulder. I was

excited. It was fun.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Anita," I answered.

"Mine is Stanley. I go to John Carroll."

Soon a fast song came on and Stanley continued dancing with me. Then another boy walked over and asked, "May I cut in?"

Stanley stepped back and the other boy continued dancing with me. Throughout the evening various boys asked me to dance, but Stanley kept coming back too. I never saw that boy who rode to the dance in the car with me until the lights came on at 10:30 and we were ready to go home. The few hours of this dance went by quickly, but I was very glad that I had gone. I emerged from my shy cocoon in that exciting social, sensual experience of my first dance.

When I got out of dad's car, I flew through the door of my home and shouted, "Mom, a boy asked me to dance! A boy asked me to dance and other boys wanted to dance with me too!"

I really enjoyed being at Notre Dame and became close to the girls there. I formed friendships with students in my class, as well as some ahead of me and behind me. At Notre Dame we were like a big

family. After school some students took the same buses that I took to get home. Even though the buses were often crowded and we couldn't sit together, when we transferred on North Capitol and Florida Avenue and waited for our connecting bus, we had the opportunity to talk. All of us carried loads of books and notebooks in our arms because we had plenty of homework. I remember January 1966 when we girls participated in a boycott of DC Transit buses organized by the Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee (SNCC) because the bus company was asking for a fare increase. We girls joined together and walked from Notre Dame up North Capitol Street and down Rhode Island Avenue. Some girls who walked with me lived in Riverdale and Bladensburg. Others veered off along the way heading down their homeward routes of streets in northwest or northeast. It was cold at first, as there was a brisk wind, but I got accustomed to the temperature. We stopped at different resting posts and put down our heavy books, but I actually enjoyed our trek because we talked, sang, and joked along our way home.

Many days my father drove me to school as he went to the Government Printing Office. Since I was on Dad's schedule, I got to school early, so I would go to daily Mass at St. Aloysius which was adjacent to Notre Dame and Gonzaga. The peaceful prayer of

Daily Mass started my day off with renewed spirituality, and I looked forward to it. After school two afternoons a week, I volunteered in a program organized and run by Father McKenna, a priest at St. Aloysius. We tutored boys and girls in the neighborhood, helping them with reading, math, and their homework. I enjoyed working with Father McKenna because he truly loved helping those children and their families. More and more children seemed eager to come for tutoring. I found out that this was just one of many great programs that Father McKenna initiated, and I was happy to provide my small bit of service. I could see that Father McKenna was very giving, loving, and sincere. To me he appeared to be a living saint.

When I was fifteen, I got another brother. St. Joseph's Home for Boys was just several blocks from our house, and for a few years my parents had volunteered to bring two of the boys to our home for the holidays and some weekends. In 1967, though, the home was closing and all of the boys needed to be placed in foster care. One of the sisters there called my mother and asked if she and my father would be able to take one of the boys into full time foster care. My parents were inclined to take the older of the two boys because he had been visiting with us longer, but the nun said that a member of his family had already

decided to take him, so she would be most grateful if we took Antonio, the younger boy. My mother called a family meeting, and we agreed to bring Antonio into our home as part of our family. Antonio was quite in the middle of Bill and me. He was just two years younger than I and two years older than Bill. My parents transferred him to St. Francis de Sales where Bill was attending, and everyone there liked him. He was very quiet. He enjoyed sports and was a good athlete. Antonio lived with us for a few years, and I enjoyed having him as my brother. My family had high hopes that they could save the world one child at a time.

My brothers and I did not have many large birthday parties while we were growing up, but there were always great family celebrations. My birthday, occurring two days after Christmas, usually got lumped in with the Christmas celebration. In fact, I would usually have an extra present under the tree that my parents said was my birthday present, but sometimes a big present was just deemed my Christmas and birthday present combined. I was, though, given a real birthday party when I turned sixteen, and it was wonderful. My mom let me plan the food menu, and I wanted to have hot dogs, chips, and punch. Mom said that she would also make potato salad, deviled eggs, and a vegetable platter. Since the

party was going to be in my basement, I was eager to help clean and decorate before the Christmas holiday approached. My parents said that I could invite 25 guests, and that was the hardest part because I had some family members, friends from school, friends from my neighborhood, and friends who were children of my parents' friends. I started making my list, adding more and more names that could not be left out. I told some people at school about the party, and they told other people who also wanted to come. Even some Carroll and St. John's, boys whom I didn't know, found out that there was going to be a party and wanted to come. When I eventually gave my mom the guest list, it had over 45 names, and my mother panicked when she heard that some people who were not on the list might just show up because they knew about the party. That was 1967 and my parents were not prepared to deal with teenagers who wanted to crash a party, so they hired a guard to be on the door for the night.

Luckily, everything turned out great the evening of the party. The decorations were nice, and we dimmed the lights for a nice effect. We had plenty of records and some friends were bringing more to put on the Hi Fi that stood prominently against the wall at the center of the basement with its wood cabinet polished and the top door open and waiting. Dad and

a guard were at the door with the guest list to admit those whose names were among the invitees. Friends of my parents sat in the living room and mingled among my guests in the basement. Mom had made plenty of food and two big bowls of punch that kept being replenished. She had someone serve the punch because she wanted to make sure that no one slipped anything into the punch. She said to her friend that the punch had to stay virgin and emphasized to me, "Watch those punch bowls." We did have a nice, clean party. We danced, ate, and had a great time. Near the end of the party two of the supposed-to-be-coolest guys at Carroll whom I didn't know came there on motorcycles and somehow got in. They seemed to make a hit with the crowd and kept the party lively. After that party I was looked at as a girl who was "cool" and "accepted," but that was not important to me. I was happy that I had the party and it was fun, but I was still just me.

Mom was the greatest cook! Every day she fixed full breakfasts and dinners, and she offered food to everyone who came around near mealtime. People liked her food, and it seemed that friends and family members often stopped over just around dinner time. The only meals that I did not relish were those on Fridays during Lent. Mom usually baked a large fish or cooked a pot of bean soup for dinner, and I didn't

like either one. These Friday dishes had been a tradition that extended back not only during my childhood but also my mother's. Holiday times were quite special. For Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, mom not only invited friends, family, and priests, but she also kept an open-door policy for whoever wanted to come for dinner. She spent days preparing for these meals and never asked anyone else to contribute to the cooking. The aromas of homemade pies and cakes when I stepped into the house were the first hint of the upcoming holiday. The one job that I always did, though, was to polish the silver. So, I eagerly began my task of washing and shining each tray, urn, gravy bowl, and silver item that was to be used. Holiday meals were always eaten on china and with the silverware that was otherwise safely kept in its chest. Neatly laundered linen table cloths and napkins were placed on the dining room table that had been extended to seat ten people, as well as the two other tables set up in the adjoining living room. We sure ate high on the hog for the holidays. Mom prepared a turkey, ham, pigs' feet, chitterlings, collard greens, string beans, deviled eggs, potato salad, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, gravy, candied sweet potatoes, stuffing, iced tea, punch, and homemade rolls. Although she set all of the food on the table or buffet, mom, the chef, was also the main

server, as she tried to accommodate everyone.

My mother's side of the family was very small. There was only my mother's sister, Aunt Hazel, and my mother's uncle, Brother (whom I always called Uncle Bubbles). Mom did not know about any other living cousins or relatives. Hazel never had any children. Brother never had any children, but his second wife Sue had two grown boys when he married her. Richard and Ronald, Sue's sons, were both married, and one had a son. Even though that side of the family was small, I felt close to them. Sometimes Bill and I would spend the weekend at Hazel's house. We went there quite often. My parents drove to visit Hazel at least once a week. Even though Hazel never drove, she would catch the bus and come to our house and stay for a few days. My scariest remembrance of being at Aunt Hazel's house was a time when she and her second husband, Wylie, were separating. The two of them were moving out of their house on Lang Place NE and dividing the furnishings. Both of them wanted one of the lamps, and they fought over it. They were yelling and screaming at each other. She tried to grab the lamp and he snatched it back. Hazel valued nice furnishings because she had studied them and bought them ever since she was young, so I don't know whether she had bought this lamp or she thought that

it was quite valuable, but for some reason that lamp was important. Then CRASH, the lamp fell and broke. Hazel began to cry and I think she must have cut herself on the broken lamp because she was bleeding. In the end, though, after all of the arguing, no one got the lamp.

When I was sixteen I got into an argument with my mother because I felt that I had been unfairly disciplined. I was so angry that I went upstairs to my room huffing and crying. I decided that if I ran away from home, my mother would be hurt and sorry that she had not respected me. I took my transistor radio and left the house through the front door while my mother was in the basement. I started walking down Vista Street and turned down South Dakota Avenue to Bladensburg Road. I didn't have a specific destination but I was enjoying the walk. I crossed New York Avenue and passed Mount Olivet Cemetery. I stopped to look at the tombstones that were for sale on the corner across from the cemetery. Then I walked down 15th Street past Sears & Roebuck to Benning Road. There were plenty of stores on Benning Road, and I passed lots of people but I didn't stop. By this time, I wasn't angry or hurt any more. I was feeling free and in control. That's when I decided to go to Hazel's house. I just kept walking up Benning Road across Minnesota Avenue until I

reached the Shrimp Boat, a major seafood restaurant on East Capitol Street, where I started down Central Avenue to Aunt Hazel's house, the very house where I started off in life. When I got there, after walking a distance of just over six miles, Hazel was glad to see me but a bit surprised.

Hazel immediately hugged me and questioned, "How did you get here?"

I proudly answered, "I walked all the way here."

She immediately queried, "Does your mother know that you are here?"

I hesitated a bit then the tears started flowing and I tried to evoke sympathy from Aunt Hazel as I told her that mommy doesn't care about me. Hazel picked up the telephone and called my mother. Hazel asked, "Do you know where Anita is?"

My mother on the other end was telling Hazel that I was in my room, but Hazel told her that I was at her house. I couldn't believe it. I thought that running away would upset my mother, but my mother hadn't even missed me. That was the first and last time that I tried that particular rebellious act.

Rebellions, even for the most worthy of

causes, can leave pain and scars, but they can have a positive effect on the dynamics of the people affected by their change. One simple act can cause people to think, talk, and act differently. During my teen years I had been learning to venture farther out into the world. I met new people, engaged in challenging activities, and began solving some of my own problems. A new, more independent person was emerging from within me, and although she could be a little frightening and hurtful, she showed signs of maturity. It was the maturity which helped me realize that no matter how far I traveled, I would always be drawn back to my core support, my family. I was growing up.

A Sick Man

A sick man built a wall one day

So no one could disturb him.

He soon discovered in dismay

That people's love could cure him.

6 LAYERS OF LIFE'S CHALLENGES

Evelyn Marian Shaw Christian:

I went to the DC Public Schools during my childhood, but it sure took me quite a while to get into a school. In 1920, when I was six years old I was supposed to enter school in the first grade like other children, but I had a terrible cold with tonsillitis throughout the month of September; so they said that I couldn't enter school that semester. My sister, Hazel, began teaching me at home. I was all ready to start at the beginning of the second semester, but again I came down with tonsillitis and by the time I recovered it was too late to enter for that semester. Hazel continued teaching me every evening when she came home from school. She would even teach me what she had been learning in the fifth grade each day. The next July and August, my grandmother kept me away from everyone. She made me drink warm liquids and take cod liver oil. I even had to wear warm clothing in the heat of the summer. She would not let me go

anywhere without a scarf around my neck and a hat on my head. She wanted to make sure that I did not get sick before the entrance time for school. In September, at the age of seven, I entered school for the first time. Thanks to all that Hazel had taught me, I was immediately skipped from 1A to 1B and within a few weeks to 2A and then 2B because I had mastered all previous skills. I was in the second half of the second grade.

Each year I continued to suffer with a sore throat and severe colds because of my cryptic tonsils. The doctor recommended that my tonsils be taken out, but Mama refused because a child in the neighborhood had died of a tonsil operation. The infections persisted until I was eighteen, when I got my tonsils removed. I was always getting sick and having to stay out of school. It is a wonder that I ever made it through to get an education.

One serious illness that was not related to my tonsils occurred when I was eight. I had a splinter in my finger which caused an infection. I ran a very high temperature for a week and had to stay out of school. I had been learning about apostrophes in school and I was finding it difficult to remember the rules. I worried about being absent and missing those grammar lessons because I thought that I would surely

fall behind in that subject. With this fever I was having delusions, and my family said that I was talking out of my head. The doctor had given me antibiotics, but everyone was worried about me because the fever remained. Mama kept nursing me, and she said that I kept saying, "My face's hands spoke gently to me." When the temperature broke and I awakened, Mama said that it was a splinter that caused my infection. Mama said that the splinter had traveled from my finger up my hand and came out my arm. I don't know if what Mama said was true, but there is still a scar on my arm where the splinter is supposed to have come out.

Although my sister and I were extremely close, our personalities were different. I enjoyed happy, gay music, and Hazel identified with the blues. I never wanted to look back at family history, and Hazel kept saying, "I want to know my father and his people." I ran from Blanche when she started fussing and cursing. Hazel stood there and fussed back, which is why Hazel got more of the beatings. Blanche would hit her with anything that she had in her hand. I always thought Hazel was pretty and I would tell her, "I wish I looked like you, Hazel. " But she would lean over and tell me, "No, Evvy, you're so beautiful. Everyone thinks so." Hazel was tall, thin, and light-skinned like my mother. She always had a

smile on her face. I was shorter, browner, and had a long, sharp nose. The family said that I took after my father. Hazel and I used to tell each other our innermost thoughts. Hazel always regretted that we were growing up without a father. She said that she missed having one, but I kept telling Hazel that we didn't need a father. We were doing perfectly fine. This was one feeling that Hazel had which I never understood.

My sister always looked out for me. She was very kind and was willing to sacrifice for me. If she had a scarf that I wanted, she would say, "Go on, you take it." Once when I was nine, I was very sick and I was not getting better. A doctor at the medical building where Blanche worked said that he would examine me, but I needed to bring a urine specimen. As I look back, I guess he was doing a favor for my mother. Blacks were not allowed to use the restrooms in that building, so he had me bring the specimen from home. Hazel got a jar for me to carry my urine to the medical center. I put on a good dress and my new stockings. It was a rainy day so Hazel and I bundled up and took a big umbrella. As we walked down the street, Hazel was holding the umbrella over us and I was holding my urine specimen. I felt very dizzy while I was walking, but Hazel kept saying, "We're almost there, Evvy." When we got to the curb

across the street from the building, I stumbled and dropped the bottle. It broke. Urine splashed all over my dress and stockings. I began to cry, but Hazel gently said, "Don't worry, Evvy. You'll be all right." She took me back home and helped to clean me and put me to bed. The next day Hazel and I started out on this venture again, and this time we arrived intact. We had to go up the back stairs of the medial building, since the doctors there did not usually see black patients. That day the doctor saw me after his other patients left.

I prayed the hardest when Hazel had peritonitis. Because Hazel always read, she learned about many new things. Hazel had been the person who introduced our family to the modern conveniences that made our lives run easier. One thing that she told Blanche about was sanitary napkins. Until Hazel got to be a teenager, Blanche had been using towels that had to be soaked in cold water and washed out. Hazel told Blanche, "We don't have to do this. There is something that we can wear called a Kotex and we don't have to wash it and use it again. Years later Hazel was the first one in the family to use tampons. One day she wore a tampon when she went swimming in water that was not very clean and the doctor said that it caused her to get peritonitis. Hazel was extremely ill, and I thought that

she would die, so I sat by her bed and prayed all night long. She soon began to get better.

When I was about twelve or thirteen, one man used to take my mother out to many places. His name was Eddie and he was a heavy, medium-complexioned man from down south who always had a smile on his face. Hazel and I liked him because he was nice and funny. Blanche said that one day Eddie was at a counter ordering food and told the cook he would treat everyone in the place. He said, "Set the house up with a nickel's worth of fish." Everybody laughed. He took Blanche to shows at the Lincoln Theater and Howard Theater and would take her to get something to eat afterwards. When he came to the house to pick her up he had a box of chocolates for her that they would eat in the theater, but he always opened it and gave Hazel and me a piece before they left. He also told Hazel and me, "I'll bring you girls back something good." Hazel and I would sit on the steps waiting for Blanche and Eddie to get home. One of my mother's favorite places to stop after the show was O'Donnell's, where they would order oysters to take out. When the door opened Hazel and I could smell the fried oysters and pickles and knew that the bag in Eddie's hands held a treat for us. Eddie took Blanche many places that she wanted to go. Blanche loved the beach, but she would not go away with

Eddie without the accompaniment of her family or her best friend Florence. One time Eddie came and told Blanche, "I'm going to take you to Atlantic City."

Blanche said, "Okay, if Florence can come too."

That Saturday, Eddie not only took Blanche and Florence to the beach in Atlantic City, but he also took Hazel and me too. Eddie made sure that we all had a lot of fun. I wanted my mother to keep going out with Eddie, but it seemed like she was not really interested in him or any other men by that time.

As my mother leased the large homes where we lived, she took in roomers. The roomers who lived with us were very different. One time there was a tall, thin black woman who had a white chubby woman as her roommate. Their room was right over the bedroom that Hazel and I shared, and we heard slapping noises coming from their room. After we told Blanche about the sounds that we heard, those ladies didn't stay long. One family who roomed upstairs consisted of a husband who worked on the road, his wife who stayed home and cooked, and their baby who crawled around on the floor. Having roomers extended our family. All of the roomers in our house used the same kitchen as our family to cook their family's meals, but this lady was the best cook. I

often saw the lady in the kitchen with her baby, fixing big meals for her husband. The baby would crawl under the table with my dog. When the dog dropped his bone, the baby picked it up and put it in her mouth. Then the dog would get it back and together they shared the bone. I wanted to take the bone away from the baby, but that mother said, "Don't worry. It won't hurt her." As soon as the husband came home, he would take his work clothes off, wash up, and eat. Mama did most of our family's cooking, but there was one roomer who had her own special recipes that she shared with our family. For example, when Mama made rolls, the dough had to sit out over night to rise, and those rolls came out heavy and hard. One day that roomer showed Mama and Hazel how she used two yeast cakes to make the rolls rise faster and come out lighter. That recipe remained in our family and we always had the best rolls. Blanche was able to use the money from the roomers to pay the rent, buy food and necessities, give her mother spending money and save for her family. One person who stayed with us was our cousin, Louis. He was Mazie's son and he lived with us after he came back from India, where he got tuberculosis (TB). When people had TB everything that they used had to be isolated, so we had our work cut out for us. We washed his dishes and linen separately. We constantly washed everything in

the household with Lysol. To this day I am sick of the smell of Lysol.

We called my uncle "Brother." His name was Thomas Shaw, like his father's. Brother was born in October 1896, and he was eighteen when I was born. He worked as a messenger in the government. As the uncle in the household he sometimes took Hazel and me out, but usually he was busy working and dating. Brother was kind, easy going, fun-loving, and often comical. It was Brother who years later would buy the first car in the family – a 1930 black Ford Sedan, but that was after Hazel was grown and working. In fact, Hazel actually helped him buy it by putting the down payment on the car. When Brother married his first wife, Lil, he brought her to live with us. She was a nice lady who worked at the Bureau of Engraving. She would go to work dressed up in lovely suits or dresses with beautiful high heel shoes, but she took her uniform with her so she could change in order to clean the offices at that government building.

Mama often visited her niece, Mazie. Mazie was an entertainer who traveled all around singing and dancing on stage. She had a house on Pierce Street in DC with a player piano. Many people would come there and buy a glass of liquor and listen to her sing. Her first cousin Blanche, though, was not one of them.

Blanche did not approve of Maize's lifestyle. My mother wouldn't let Hazel and me go to Mazie's place, but Mama went there and when she came back home, we loved to listen to Mama tell the grown-ups about the gay life there.

Even though Mama couldn't read or write, she was very smart and knew how to get to most places. One day, during the time when liquor was prohibited, Mama found out that people were going to Baltimore and could get liquor from someone there. She decided that she had to have a bottle of liquor for guests during the Christmas season, so she took a bus and went to Baltimore. Brother was very worried about his mother and thought that she would get lost because she couldn't read the street signs. Late that evening Mama came sauntering down the street with a big bottle in her burlap sack.

From my family, I learned that two things were most important for survival: education and work. People in my family were determined, knew what they wanted, and then went after it. Proudly, I walked to my neighborhood grammar schools, Garrison and Sumner-Magruder. Even though my family moved quite a bit, these were the elementary schools for colored children in my area, so I transferred only once. I then was able to remain at the

same school until eighth grade. I was glad of that. My school building looked mainly like many schools of today. The class sizes might be considered large today but seemed normal back then. We had around 40 students in a class, and we students sat in neat rows in our neatly pressed school clothes. The teachers were truly our role models. They were very professional leaders who were also like parents to all of the children. Our teachers not only taught us, but they also counseled and cared for us. I attended Garrison through the eighth grade. That consisted of promotion though sixteen levels since each grade had an A and a B class. From there, I went to Dunbar High School just as Hazel was graduating from it. Dunbar was the academic high school for Negroes in Washington. When I attended Dunbar, my school was at 1st and M Streets NW right behind Armstrong. There were tall steps that led to the front door, and Miss Julia E. Brooks was the assistant principal of Dunbar while I was there. It was very special to have Miss Brooks because women didn't usually get to become assistant principals of high schools in the 1920's and 30's. Miss Brooks was tough as nails. She kept everyone at Dunbar in line because she was so stern and everyone respected her. Students there stayed focused on academics and displayed polished behavior. I finished all of my required college

preparatory courses at Dunbar in three years, but then I did something different. I wanted to learn some business skills, such as typing and shorthand, which were not taught at Dunbar. I thought that these skills would be useful for getting most jobs available; so I transferred to Cardozo High School, the business school for Negroes, in my senior year. One of my best friends, Roberta Swan, transferred with me. Mr. Mattingly was the principal of Cardozo that year. I really did not join any social activities at Cardozo because I knew that I was there for a purpose, to get the business courses that I wanted. That year, though, Roberta and I met a fellow from Armstrong who picked us up at lunchtime and took us to a shop near Armstrong for sandwiches.

During the summer, I also studied cosmetology from Mr. Nagasaki to give me another marketable skill and an avenue in the work world. Mr. Nagasaki had come from Japan and taught some of the newest techniques in cosmetology. In that short course I learned the science of keeping hair and skin healthy, the recipes for making hair oils and facial creams, and the art of pressing and curling various types of hair.

My sister was very studious in school. She loved to read, especially Greek and Roman

mythologies. Hazel would spend many hours in Central Public Library and then walk home with her arms full of books. Hazel was the smart one, but she sacrificed for me. When she finished Dunbar High School, she went to work and helped me go to college. Hazel worked for Dr. Newell, an ophthalmologist at the medical building where Blanche had worked for many years. She also bought me anything that I wanted. If I saw a dress in a store that I wanted, I would put it in "will call," and Hazel would give me the money to get it out. Although Hazel loved to learn, she told me that the purpose of school was to get a job, so she was happy to have entered the work world. She kept encouraging me, though, to go to college.

After Hazel graduated from Dunbar and got a job, she married her beau, Leonard Somerville. Leonard's family was from Leonardtown, Maryland. He was a Catholic and the same age as Hazel. After my sister married Leonard, he moved into our home as another extension to our family. At that time I was only fourteen, and Leonard was like a nice big brother to me. He often took Hazel and me out together. Hazel and I had done most things together. Now Hazel and Leonard were taking me out. Leonard was a lot of fun but Hazel didn't like it when he drank or gambled a little too much. One day Hazel said that he

got drunk, climbed on the stage, and took the microphone away from the singer. Leonard got pneumonia a few times and I use to pray for him. One day when I visited him in the hospital and asked him what he wanted me to bring him, he said, "A couple of cans of beer."

Hazel taught me how to build my confidence and react when others tried to tease me. During my teen years, all of the boys and girls in my neighborhood knew each other, and we were close to each other. We would get together to talk and play cards at one another's houses. Sometimes girls called me skinny but I would hold up my head and say, "You're just jealous that you're not thin."

When I was sixteen, I started to go to parties at friends' houses in the neighborhood on some Friday evenings. Boys and girls would dance, eat hot dogs, and drink punch at a few houses of friends whose parents would allow us to gather. My mother never would stand for a party at our house. When she did let me go to the parties, Blanche would tell me to be home by ten, but the party was just getting started at that time, so I didn't want to come home. If I didn't make my curfew, she would send Hazel and Leonard to get me and bring me home. One day I didn't leave with Hazel, so Blanche was furious. She walked

down the street fussing with her shoe in her hand. I was dancing when my friends saw Blanche at the front door. They said she was holding her shoe and was ready to beat me all the way home. I was so embarrassed. I slipped out the back door and ran all the way home before Blanche knew where I was. After that I always came home on time.

Bullies in my day were pretty scary. The mother of my friend, Evelyn Carrington, had a dining room in the lower part of her house. She lived down the street from Howard University near Florida Avenue and served meals to the students. Some students from Howard had monthly accounts to eat there, and other people came in off of the street to eat also. One day while I was there with my friends, Evelyn Carrington and Evelyn Curtis, a bunch of roughnecks barged into the place. We noticed them because they wore big, heavy boots and they kicked the door. Immediately they started to go ballistic. Coca Cola bottles were sitting in crates, and they knocked those over and broke some of them up just to let everyone know that they were tough. We three Evelyn girls wanted to help Mrs. Carrington, but Evelyn Curtis, who was about four foot eleven, was the bravest. She jumped up on the table and started cursing, "You get the hell out of here or…." Before she could finish the sentence a bottle flew past her

head and she ducked. When another bottle was thrown, she jumped down off the table, and we girls ran behind the counter to hide while the roughnecks drank up the sodas and ate food that had been cooked. Then they left without paying or saying a word to any of us. Those roughnecks just wanted to scare everyone to death.

I started working during the summer soon after I took Mr. Nagasaki's course and got my license. Although I was prepared for doing hair, I was disastrously unprepared to step out there in the world. I tried to work at a hairdressing job that was for a white lady washing and drying hair. I was living in NW and this job was on Pennsylvania Ave SE, which was farther than I was used to going. Leonard took me to the shop and told me to take the bus back home. I was excited about the job and when I finished that day, the lady told me I did a nice job. She said, "I'll see you tomorrow." When I left there it was getting late and I took the wrong bus. I was lost and scared because I didn't know where I was or how to get home. I got off the bus and went to a phone booth to call Leonard. When he asked me where I was, I said, "I don't know." So he said, "Stop worrying. I'll be right there. Just look at the street signs and tell me the names of the streets." I did so and waited for Leonard to come and rescue me. Even though that hairdressing

shop had been a pleasant place to work, I was too afraid to go back there because the location still seemed like a foreign territory to me.

Hazel was my backbone who gave me strength when I got another job as a hairdresser on 9th Street and was given the one chair on the right side of the shop. There were four chairs on the left side and those professional stylists, including Thelma Jackson, who later became a friend, had been established there for a while so they had their regular customers. I took the walk-ins. On my first day I worked for three hours washing, drying, pressing, and curling a lady's hair. When I finished, I thought it looked nice, but the lady started loud talking and complaining that this was not the hair style that she asked for. She said that she was not going to pay for it. The owner of the shop came over and started yelling at me too. When I got off from work that day, I was hot, tired, and humiliated. In addition to that, I had made no money for my efforts; yet I owed the owner a rental fee for my booth. I walked home crying. Hazel met me at the door and strengthened me against my adversaries. Hazel said, "Don't you even think of crying. You don't need that job." She told me, "Go back there tomorrow and if any client yells at you again, just hold your head in the air and tell them that if they can't talk to you with respect, then get a new hair

dresser. If the owner yells at you, politely tell her that you expect to be spoken to civilly and let her know that if she yells at you again, you will not work there another day." With this new inner armor, the next day was better, but it still was not ideal. I continued to work at this shop while I was in school and gained more strength and confidence.

Hazel's Blues

He walked away

And I didn't care.

He stayed away.

He was never there.

My sister saw him

On the street one day

And she never forgot

What he had to say.

"I'll be back.

I'm coming home."

But he never did.

He left us alone.

7 STEADY THE SEAM TO MATURITY

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

Nineteen sixty-eight was a tumultuous year. When Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, some parts of the city of Washington exploded. I stayed home from my school, Notre Dame, the next day after his death. On TV, I watched the looting and burning of stores along H Street near my school and dad's job. The next week was the beginning of our Easter vacation, and I did not go far from my neighborhood until well after the riots ended. Around my area all was relatively calm, and the stores on Rhode Island Avenue did not seem to be affected. When I did go back to school, the atmosphere was different. Dad drove me instead of letting me take the bus. All along H Street were empty charred buildings, and the smell of smoke was still in the air. There was debris everywhere, and the traffic was exceedingly light. Some students did not return to school for a few

weeks. Both assassinations of King and Kennedy were devastating, but the impact on life in many Washington neighborhoods after King's death was much more profound. Some stores where we had shopped were closed. The Notre Dame de Namur nuns were talking about closing their convent right across the street from the school. I no longer felt carefree and without worry as I traveled throughout my city.

This was the first time I started to become aware of why black people had been marching and protesting. I was more interested in Dr. King after his death than while he was alive, and I began to read everything that I could find on him. I also read Alex Haley's book, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X,* and various other books by black authors. As the discord emerged between what I had been taught and what I was now viewing, my eyes opened wider. This was definitely a growth period for me.

A big controversy in my parish that year also shook me. The priests at St. Francis de Sales interacted with the parishioners in many positive ways and came to visit parishioners regularly. In talking to various people, they were getting an understanding of parishioners' needs so that they could better pastor the people. Over the years, our family became very close

to some of our parish priests, including Father De Porter, Father Kennelly, and Father Bava, and conversations at the dinner table were often interesting and uplifting when a priest was there. I was very active in my parish and worked directly with many of the priests in such programs as teaching Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) and the Sodality of Our Lady as our parish continued to grow.

By the late summer and early fall of 1968 some priests had reacted to Pope Paul VI's encyclical, Humanae Vitae, and its prohibition of most means of birth control. A group of dissenting priests in Washington, including an assistant pastor in our parish, spoke out against this encyclical and said that spouses should be able to decide on the basis of their consciences whether or not to practice contraception. These priests were sanctioned by Cardinal O' Boyle.

When our assistant pastor was removed from the church, over 200 parishioners protested. In the wake of this event another priest from our parish left the priesthood. Although I had never thought about the issue of birth control before that time, it now became the subject of much discussion. I was very sad for our parish to lose such good priests. I understood that they were doing what they thought was right, so I prayed for God's blessings on them.

Going to Catholic schools enabled me to grow in some ways and yet remain unaware in others. I grew in my relationships with people and expanse of learning. My circle of friends constantly enlarged. In Catholic schools, I learned Latin as a subject, along with Spanish. Latin really helped me do well on standardized tests and enhanced my vocabulary understanding. Academically I developed the knowledge that prompted me to want more knowledge. When it came to fashion, though, I was either too naïve or too uninterested to pursue common teenage fads. I never formed a desire for trendy clothes or name brand shoes because I had always worn uniforms to school. I was very comfortable in my Notre Dame uniform of white blouse, blue skirt and blazer, bobby socks and black and white saddle oxford shoes. I definitely was not affected by what fashions were popular during my teen years of the sixties.

I enjoyed working and always loved saving my money. I did not want to spend money frivolously but formed the habit of putting it away for long term goals. I had three long term goals: a car, college, and a treasure trove for marriage. Of course, in addition to savings, I also gave a third of the money that I made to my parents and kept a third for such necessities as bus fare for getting to work. When I was fifteen, Mrs.

Nickerson helped me to get my first job at Schaeffer's Florist on 19th and I Streets NW because she knew one of the flower arrangers there. In the center of the florist shop there was an island, like a big cylinder, with five or six wall phones mounted around it. Under the phones there was a small shelf going around the cylinder that held pencils, order forms, and blank paper. I stood at the phone island along with other people, and we answered the incoming calls while writing down all of the pertinent information, such as name, address, phone number, location of destination, occasion, date, time needed for arrival, and type of arrangement with specific flower choices. Sometimes I would give suggestions if people asked. Other times I would pass the call on to one of the arrangers. I worked during every holiday season when many people ordered flowers and the shop was very busy. I also worked there during the summer when it was not as hectic, and I was able to work with the arrangers, write the tags for the arrangements, or help customers who walked in to buy flowers. Working downtown was interesting because there were many stores all around and plenty of people shopping. I usually brought my own lunch but sometimes I went out with others to browse in a shop or eat at one of the nearby restaurants. I appreciated this job because I learned about many different

flowers. I also learned all of the funeral homes and hospitals in the Washington area.

While I was sixteen I got a job at Miller's Dress Shop on 18th and Rhode Island Ave. NE making $1.54 an hour. Not only was I making more money than I made at the florist, but Miller's was walking distance from home so I didn't have to catch the bus downtown. I was able to work after school a few days a week, on weekends, during holidays, and over my summer vacation. Working at Miller's was not as busy, but I was able to learn about some of the newest fashions that came out. One of the benefits in working in the store was that I could get a discount on items that I bought, but I really did not care much about clothes so I paid little heed to that benefit. While I worked there I was able to save more money. I paid Easy Method to teach me to drive, and I practiced driving using one of my father's big, heavy, older cars that was very hard to turn because it did not have power steering. I passed the test on my first attempt and got my driver's license. I knew that I wanted a car, and Volkswagen enticed me with its TV commercial advertising a brand new Beetle for $1995. That was a goal to work toward!

Two days before my seventeenth birthday I got the biggest Christmas-birthday surprise ever: a

brand new car! I was a senior at Notre Dame and had been saving some of my money from my jobs. I never imagined that my father would give me such an awesome thing as a car. I couldn't believe it, but when I awakened Christmas morning my parents led me to the back door. A beautiful sky-blue Ford Falcon sat in the driveway with a bow on it. My father handed me the keys, and I said in disbelief, "This is for me?" I ran out and got in the car. The whole family came out, and I drove everyone around the corner. It was utterly fantastic! That was the best Christmas surprise that I could have had.

During the summer of 1969 after I graduated from Notre Dame, I took my first trip out of the country. St. Francis de Sales sponsored a trip that included two days in Miami Beach and a three day cruise to Nassau and Freeport. In Miami Beach, our large hotel was right on the water. The water was nice and the sand was beautiful. We got tickets and went to Jackie Gleason's live comedy show, which was very funny. The next day we boarded the ship and met the captain. Bill, my cousin Pam, Henry Holland, and I were the young set who did activities together. We played games, danced, and enjoyed going all around on the ship. Being on a cruise was so luxurious and fun. There were always things to do. The food was plentiful, delicious, and unending. I never knew

that people could get so much care and service as we got on that cruise. My father kept coughing, and a steward kept coming to see if he needed help. My father held up his cigarettes and told him, "No, it's nothing, just these cancer sticks." I enjoyed Nassau much more than Freeport because I thought that its flower gardens and waterfalls were beautiful. I bought things from some of the vendors and talked to many people there. Mr. Curry, a member of St. Francis who was from Nassau, arranged for us to have a lovely lunch with Archbishop Hagarty, the archbishop of Nassau. The day that we were to go to lunch, a big storm came and the rain and wind were very strong. There were flood warnings, but we walked through streets with the water up to our knees. We hadn't completely dried off by the time that we made our way to the archbishop's residence. That really was an exciting trip with all of its awesome activities.

The decisions that we make in life start the wheels in motion that propel us forward in one direction or another. While I was young, I knew that I wanted to become a teacher, so during my senior year at Notre Dame Academy, even though I was offered a scholarship in music to another university, I decided to attend DC Teachers College. My decision was based on three things: DC Teachers had an excellent

reputation for my chosen profession; the tuition was affordable enough that with summer, holiday, and on-campus part-time jobs, I could pay for my entire education; and with a younger brother still in school, I wanted to be financially independent or at least not a burden to my parents.

I am so glad that I decided to go to DC Teachers College because during my freshman year I met my future husband, Robert E. Lee, Jr. He was determined, hard-working, kind, and intelligent. He was also quite cute. Robert reminded me of my own father because Robert, like my dad, took on responsibilities early in life. Robert, like my dad, worked and put himself through school. Robert, like my dad, gave money to help his parents. I thought that he was a gem of a young man, and my father really liked him too. My father often talked to Robert and gave him advice, which Robert would heed.

Robert and I dated throughout our college years. We went to movies, restaurants, and cabarets. Often we sat in my basement and did homework while we listened to 33 1/3 albums and even some my mother's old 78's on the component system with external speakers that Robert bought for me the first Christmas we were dating. Sometimes we put on a 45 record and danced. I worked hard at DC Teachers

College, obtaining special permission to exceed the maximum 21 semester hours of credits each semester and attending all summer sessions. The hard work paid off, and I was able to finish the four year elementary education program in three years.

The day that I finished my student teaching I decided to go back to the college to speak to the dean who placed students in teaching jobs. That decision seemed to put me in the right place at the right time because while I was there, a call came in from The Episcopal Center for Children (ECC) looking for a teacher. The dean asked me if I wanted to go for an interview there and I said, "I'd love to." He set up the interview for that same day.

The Episcopal Center was located at Nebraska and Utah Avenues NW, and I did not know where that was, so my dad drove me there. When we arrived at the school it seemed like a large mansion on a sprawling estate. As I walked into the large front foyer, a grandfather clock was facing me in the right corner of the foyer. The secretary led me to offices of Mrs. Elsa Miller, Episcopal Center for Children's Director, and then to Mr. Alan Korz, the Assistant Director. I learned that ECC was not just a school but a five-day residential treatment center for emotionally disturbed children. After Mrs. Miller and

Mr. Korz explained the program and asked me a few questions, Mr. Korz took me on a tour of the school and told me that I had the job. That was a Friday afternoon in the second week of September 1972, and I would start on Monday. I was so excited because this was the profession for which I had planned ever since I was a child. I was eager to see children light up with joy about learning. I was ready to be a teacher.

After I got my first teaching job, one of my first big purchases was a piece of land. I had become fascinated with real estate ever since my grandmother told me that as long as a person owned land, he or she had something. I was determined to have some ownership, so in January 1973 eagerly I bought an acre of land from my grandma for $200.

That same year my father became quite ill with cancer of the esophagus. While he was in the hospital, Robert told my father that he wanted to marry his daughter and take care of her for the rest of his life. Dad gave Robert his blessing. On May 29, 1973, the day before my brother's graduation from high school and two days before Robert's and my formal graduation from DC Teachers College, my father died. His death was hard for all of us. My dad was like a superhero to me. I felt that he could do anything. After all, without any help he had

transformed the empty attic of our house into our upstairs three-bedroom living quarters. He had created a perfect rec room, kitchen, and family gathering room in our basement. He could fix cars and any appliance in our house. On top of all of that, he was always actively involved. He worked hard on his jobs and volunteered with many organizations at church, with the Boy Scouts, Catholic Charities, and Meals on Wheels. My father was also around when anyone needed him and would come to the aid of family members, friends, and strangers. He had taken me to school and to parties. Times when I locked my keys in the car or had an accident he came to my rescue. Whenever I needed him, all I had to do was call him and he would drop anything and come. I couldn't believe that my father was dead, but I found comfort in Monsieur Lyons' words at the funeral and always remembered them: "When you look up tonight, a new star will be twinkling in the sky. That will be Bill Christian in his rightful place resting in heaven."

A few months after my father's death, my mother was diagnosed with colon cancer and underwent surgery removing a portion of her colon; but because she had begun making preparations for my wedding, her will and determination gave her the strength for a remarkable recovery.

I had matured greatly over the past few years and tried to be supportive to my parents during their sicknesses. When my father died, I helped my mother handle the funeral arrangements, and when my mother was hospitalized, I helped her manage the household expenses. Along with my support of family, I was following my own dreams. I had become a teacher, bought my first piece of property, and was preparing to marry my true love. I was moving forward in fulfilling my goals.

8 OVER AND UNDER IN THE REAL WORLD

Evelyn Marian Shaw Christian:

The first home that our family owned was the one in which Brother Frank had asked Blanche to take over. Frank Proctor, whom we called "Brother Frank," was my mother's first cousin. He was one of the children of my grandmother's only sister, Martha Williams Proctor, whom she had brought to Washington from Prince George's County, Maryland when he was six years old. Frank had two brothers, Ollie and Ervin Proctor, and one sister, Mazie Jones, who was the "show girl" and was always off singing and dancing on stage. His wife, Florence James Proctor, had died years ago and they had no children. So as Brother Frank started getting ill and felt he was unable to keep up the mortgage payments on his house, he asked his cousin, Blanche, who had a good business sense, to take over the notes on the home as long as she let him continue to live there. Blanche moved our family into our first family-owned home at 30 Quincy Place, NW, right down the street from the fire house on North Capitol Street.

Blanche, my sister, and I took care of Brother Frank for over a year right there in that home until he died. Since he was confined to his bed, we washed him, brought meals to him, and kept him comfortable. I liked Brother Frank because he was so nice. He was also a saver. Before he died, Brother Frank called me to his room and said, "Look in that shoebox on the top shelf of my closet." I did so, and there was over $100. He said, "Take it. You'll know what to do with it." I took it and divided it with my mother and my sister. Brother Frank was a Catholic and had joined Holy Redeemer Church when he was younger. He was the first person who taught Hazel and me about the Catholic Church. A priest from his church used to come to the house and pray with him. Brother Frank knew when he was ready to leave this earth and wanted to see a priest. The priest came immediately, and Brother Frank received Extreme Unction. He died peacefully within the next few days.

My family had been members of Baptist and Methodist churches. Brother joined Shiloh Baptist Church as a young man and was quite active there. Blanche had attended Metropolitan Baptist Church for years but eventually joined John Wesley AME Zion Church. Hazel and I went to those churches with our family. On Sundays all of those churches were crowded, and the large choirs sang many songs.

Everyone wore their nicest fur coats and big beautiful hats. After Hazel married Leonard, the two of them attended Mass at St. Augustine Catholic Church, and I went there with them. I liked the Catholic Church because it was quiet and peaceful. I really had not liked the loud music, preaching, and clapping in the Baptist and Methodist churches that I had attended.

St. Augustine was a parish that had for years served blacks and was very friendly, so I felt comfortable worshipping there. Hazel decided that she was going to make a perpetual Novena to pray for her husband to stop drinking and gambling. I told her that I wanted to go with her. I learned that a Novena was a set of prayers that were recited for nine days for a particular purpose, but prayers in a Perpetual Novena could continue indefinitely when they were said on a designated day. Hazel found a Catholic parish downtown where people could come to pray the Novena every Monday evening. At that church, though, blacks had to stand up in the back of the church even though there were vacant pews up front. Every Monday after Hazel left work and I left school, we would meet at this church to pray the Novena. Hazel was usually quite tired after work but we continued our Novena for years. Then one day Hazel said, "Why are we standing and kneeling back here when there are plenty of empty pews with kneelers up

front? Come on, Evvy, we're getting out of here." Hazel turned around in the middle of the Novena and walked out of the church and never went back.

I had always wanted to become a nurse, but I was told that I was too frail to go into that career, so I entered Miner Teachers College in Washington to pursue another interest. During my first few years at Miner Teachers College, I rented a booth at Mrs. Bell's Beauty Parlor on Ninth Street NW where I worked part time as a beautician.

During my freshman year in college, I met Meredith Simmons, a student at Howard University. He was one year older than I was. When I saw him I thought to myself, what a tall handsome fellow! Meredith was from a family of educators who believed that education would be the key to the future of our people. His aunt and uncle taught at Dunbar High School where I had attended. After almost a year of dating, Meredith and I married. We lived with my family and continued going to school. Meredith had only one sister, who was a bit younger than he was. Meredith's cute little sister was thin and frail and she ate very little. Her mother always said, "Don't worry about her; she never wants food." There wasn't much time to worry because soon after that she died of tuberculosis. Although we had

pleasant times and did many things together, our marriage seemed so short lived. I really didn't know that he was sick, but Meredith died of tuberculosis in less than a year after we were married. My family and I were tested for tuberculosis; although our TB tests came back positive for exposure, x-rays showed we were never seriously affected and we never got the disease.

Soon after Meredith died, one day Mama fainted and everyone in the house was upset. Mama had often had dizzy, fainting spells because of her high blood pressure, and I was used to caring for her. I got a cold wet towel to put on her head, but that didn't help much. She did open her eyes briefly but she didn't say a word. Then Mama calmly passed away.

After Mama's and Meredith's deaths I became confused about life and a little despondent. I wouldn't go out many places. I had just completed two years of college when I decided not to enroll for the next semester. Everyone just let me mope for a while. Then Hazel started pulling me back to life again. She pressured me to go back and finish college. She and Leonard took me to parties at places like the Odd Fellows Hall. One day Hazel said, "A friend of Leonard wants to go out with you. His name is

William Lester Christian, but we call him Les." Hazel and Leonard invited him over to dinner one day so that he could meet me. After that I was on an upward road.

I began doing pleasurable things again. Les and I would spend summer evenings together riding the streetcars. People at that time had no air conditioners so we would go down to Haines Point or by the reservoir near North Capitol Street and have picnics by the water. In the evenings, my family and I would listen to the radio. My favorite show was "The Lone Ranger." Les and I would go with Hazel and Leonard to the movies, which we continued to do for years. Many times Blanche would come too.

When I did return to Miner Teachers College I was a bit older and a felt few steps behind others that I had known. However, I met two new great friends: Hulda, who was a little older than I with a daughter named Candice; and Vera, who was the smart one because she knew the answers to everything. I had a hard time remembering the things that I studied. One time I even wrote two answers on the palm of my hand before I went in for a test but I was so nervous about getting caught that I couldn't even look at my hand. The hardest course for me was psychology with Dr. McAlister. She was tough as nails. She would

rub her hands together and say, "I know you can't pass this exam." With the help of Hulda and Vera, and by studying all night, I passed that psychology course. I did wonders to get out of school because I wasn't smart, but my friends and I studied hard and we graduated together. I was quite excited when I graduated from Miner Teachers College with a Bachelors of Science Degree in 1937.

After college, I took and passed the National Teachers Examination, a new qualifying test for teachers at that time, but was put on the waiting list until a teacher was needed in one of the Negro schools. There were only a few schools for black children, and the teachers who were there stayed for many years, so the openings did not come often. Therefore, I went to work as a card punch operator in the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau was part of the Commerce Department, and later I was promoted to clerk for the Commerce Department. I met some lasting friends while I was in the government. Antoinette Taylor helped me when I first started and we became good friends after that. I also met one of my dearest friends, Thelma Holland, while I was at Commerce. I was glad to have gotten a job in the government, and I stayed there until 1951 when I had my first child.

I was still living at home with my family when I finished college. Les was living with his Aunt Margaret in SE Washington. Aunt Margaret was the widowed wife of Uncle Marcellus, one of Les's uncles on his mother's side. Uncle Marcellus's son, James Broady, was the same age as Les, and the two cousins enjoyed living together. Aunt Margaret's sister, Aunt Lena, lived next door and they both lived across the street from St. Cyprian's Catholic Church, where they were leading parishioners. Every year at Christmas Aunt Margaret had a dinner after Midnight Mass, and it seemed that everyone from the church came over to eat. Likewise, every Easter Aunt Lena had a big breakfast for the entire parish. Les said that he became a Catholic when he moved from Virginia to Washington because Aunt Margaret had told him, "You can't live in my house unless you are a Catholic." Both Aunt Margaret's house and Aunt Lena's house used lamp lights because they did not have electricity. Aunt Margaret liked to dress up. When she found out that I had taken up beauty culture, she told me to follow her downstairs. She led the way down into her dark basement and said, "I'm not letting everybody see my head." Then she took off her wig, and I was shocked because she was bald. That day I curled her wig, and she was pleased. After that, she insisted that I continue doing her hair.

I felt lucky to be in love with Les because he was smart, a hard worker, and a person who easily learned how to do most things. When Les first came to DC he had worked on the loading dock for Woodward & Lothrop. That called for heavy lifting, and he hurt his back, an injury that plagued him off and on for the rest of his life. Since he liked to study and learn new things, he took up barbering at Phelps Vocational School.

The 1940's were the most interesting years to me. There was a lot of change going on in everyone's lives. On June 5, 1943, I married William Lester Christian. We did not have a big fancy wedding. We simply went to Reverend Wallace's home on Blaine Street and got married. Then Les and I moved to a house at 404 Division Avenue, NE. Even though we were in the same city, I felt far away from my family. This was the first time in my life that I had lived away from my mother and sister. Les worked as a tabulator at the Social Security Building in Baltimore. As a tabulator, he arranged information and put it on large disks. Today computers have taken over that job. Well, every day he commuted back and forth from Washington to Baltimore. During the Second World War, many job opportunities opened for black people. Government jobs provided our people benefits that they never had before. People were able to get sick

leave and annual leave. They had retirement benefits. Women were getting jobs that had previously been held by men because many of the men had gone to war. In my family, Blanche and Hazel were able to get government jobs. Brother and I got promotions.

Hazel loved to buy nice furnishings, just as our mother did. She would shop at an antique store on 18th & U Street NW. This store sold high quality used furniture. Hazel was well known there because she came in often, browsing for specific designers or pieces. She bought a beautiful French provincial living room sofa with two chairs that had belonged to a serviceman who went overseas. She also bought two corner china cabinets. These things were made well and constructed to last. In fact, even after over sixty-five years since Hazel bought them, they still are being used in my house today.

Because there were fewer men in the city, women missed having the men around. Hazel worked at the Treasury Department where from her window she could see the trains coming in. Hazel said that the young ladies would get excited when they saw a train full of soldiers come into town. They would yell, "Troop Train, Troop Train!"

During World War II, Washington had to be kept dark at night so enemy planes couldn't fly over

and spot any targets for bombing. We kept the lights off or kept the shades down on the windows in the house. Les was classified as 1-A, which meant that he was eligible for the service, but because he was a bit older he was placed on active reserves for a short time. During that time Les was a volunteer fireman and warden. One duty that he performed was going to people's houses with a warning if light could be seen coming from their house.

Les was called into active duty on September 4, 1943, and was sent to Amarillo, Texas, where he worked as a mechanic on planes. This was the first time that I was truly alone. I was living by myself on Division Avenue when the scariest thing occurred. One night soon after Les left, the house was completely dark as I lay in bed trying to go to sleep. The wind-up clock on the bed stand sounded so loud that I turned it around. It still resounded loudly, "Tick, tock." So I laid it face down on the table. When it continued to reverberate, "Tick, tock," I put a pillow over it, but the clock still bellowed, "Tick, Tock." Then I sat up and grabbed the clock. I took the clock downstairs and I went back up to bed. Suddenly I heard the clock faintly in the distance whisper, "Tick, Tock." Then it grew louder and louder. I could hear the clock at the bottom of the stairs, "Tick, Tock." I distantly heard the clock

coming up the stairs, "Tick Tock Tick Tock." I threw on my clothes and ran out the door to the bus stop. I took the bus to Blanche's house on Quincy Place. After that, I did not want to stay home alone. Some nights I stayed at Quincy Place with my family. Other nights Hazel or Blanche would come over to Division Avenue to stay with me. I really was not used to being alone.

I took my longest trip by myself when I went by train to Texas to see Les. Since the train was segregated, I was on one of the colored cars of the train, and it was very crowded. Many people were standing or sitting in the aisles. I met some soldiers and wives of soldiers who were on the train and going to same place that I was, Perrin Field Air Force Base in Texas. The soldiers and other men were very polite. They gave up their seats to the women so we could have seats. I became close to one girl who was the wife of a soldier at Perrin Field when we roomed together. One night, when we had to transfer trains, we were laid over in a town for a night. I didn't know where to go, but the porter suggested that I try the Young Women's Christian Association (YMCA). This young lady and I were able to get a nice room at the YMCA, and we stayed up talking for hours. That trip was good for me because it helped me to learn how to do something independently. I was really

happy to see Les, and going there allowed me to better await his return. Les was never sent overseas. He spent his active duty time there in Texas and on October 18, 1945, was honorably discharged from the service.

When Les came back home, he started working at the Government Printing Office and really liked it. I was quite happy and life was full of excitement. Our home was open to family as they came to the city and we entertained friends quite often. Our neighborhood was full of young couples, and we often hosted card parties that were fun. Good friends, like Ethel Mae and Ben Parker, Bussey and Loraine Perkins were quite at home at our house. One evening, when Les brought me home from work at the Census, I walked into the house and smelled dinner cooking. Our friends said, "Sit down and eat so we can get this game started."

Soon after we moved to Division Avenue, Les's brother John came to Washington and moved in with us. John got a good job laying linoleum and carpeting which he liked. John and Les were very close, and both men could fix almost everything. They bought and worked on cars, rebuilding engines and any parts that needed fixing. John looked so much like Les that sometimes when John walked into the

house I had to look twice before I could recognize who it was. John lived with us until he moved into his own apartment. Then Les's brother Robbie came up to Washington and lived with us for a short while. Les helped Robbie to get a job at the Government Printing Office. When Edith and Wes first moved to Washington, they also lived with us on Division Avenue, NE before they got their own place. One day Edith and I were walking toward the drug store by Division Avenue. Those roads were kind of country back then. A man started walking behind us and we didn't look back.

Edith just said, "Let's run."

So we ran and the man started running too. Before I knew it, Edith, with her short legs, took off and passed me. I couldn't believe how fast she could run. She ran down the block and into the drug store.

When I got there, the owner of the store said, "What's wrong?"

We said, "A man is after us."

He looked out the door and didn't see a soul.

After the war, housing opportunities opened up for many people. The GI Bill allowed all veterans to be able to go back to school, start businesses, and

buy a house with no money down. These were great benefits, and Les was ready to take advantage of them. One day Les walked into the kitchen and told me that he was going to buy us a house. We went to look at many houses, but I was quite picky and nothing seemed to suit me. I wanted to try some more expensive houses, but after we looked at the one on Central Avenue Les said, "I like this one."

I complained, "It has a window in the closet that faces the front of the house. How am I going to decorate that window?"

Les just gazed at me and finally said, "I have looked at houses as much as I can and this is one that I can afford to pay for on my own. I'm going to buy it. Either you are with me or not."

Les and I bought that cheerful house at 5311 Central Avenue SE, and it turned out to be perfect. I loved the sounds that surrounded this house. A DC Transit bus stop was at the end of our block, and the buses would rev up just as they got in front of our bedroom window. It was on a busy street which was considered a major road to Annapolis, Maryland. We often had guests. Whenever friends would go to the beach, they would stop by our house. Les also bought a beach house at Sparrows Beach, but we didn't keep it long. Les said, "This is too much work keeping it

up. When we go to the beach I want to relax there and not spend all the time working at the house." So we sold the beach house to our friends, Carroll and Gwen Watts. By the mid 1950's blacks were able to move into suburban-like homes in DC. Blanche decided to buy a home in the Woodridge area of Northeast. Hazel and Leonard had just recently divorced. So in June 1955 Blanche and Hazel bought a Cape Cod home on Vista Street NE with plenty of land surrounding it.

Les was a very hard worker. He usually maintained two jobs during the forties and fifties, but at one time he had three jobs. Les opened up a barber shop with one of his cousins. It was at the top of Central Avenue right up the street from our house and the business was doing quite well. Then one day his cousin was picked up for illegal number writing at the shop. Les was implicated because the business was in his name. He was quite upset. Sadly, he closed down his barber shop and ended his business. He was already working in the federal government as a clerk at the Government Printing Office, which he kept until he retired. While there he also became president of his union. He encouraged others to come into the government, including his brother Robbie. While at GPO, Les got his hacker's license and drove a taxi cab. At one point he also worked a third job at night

as a bell hop at a hotel.

Even though Les and I wanted children, the doctor told me that I could never have a baby because I had an infantile uterus. Then, the first miracle in my life happened. I was very thrilled and surprised when in 1951 the doctor told me that I was pregnant. My first child, Anita, was born on December 27, 1951. Les was so protective of our little girl that, as many of our friends dropped by, he would have them wear face masks when they stepped in the room to see her. Most of our friends were happy for us because they knew that we wanted children.

One friend, though, had the nerve to say to me, "It's too bad. At your age you'll never live to see this child grow up."

I laughed when I thought how I not only lived to see my children grow up and marry, but I also lived to see some of their children grow up, and even saw some of the children of my grandchildren grow. That friend who made the comment, though, passed away years ago. When Anita was an infant, she would cry most of the time. Blanche stayed with us and helped out during the first week. Then Les asked Martha Moore, another friend, to stay over and help me with the baby for two weeks. I was godmother to Martha's oldest child, Harvette, so she was happy to help. We

needed everyone's assistance because Anita needed so much attention and we were not sure what to do. Les would pick her up and walk with her to try to stop her from crying. All of the walking, soothing, cooing, changing, and feeding didn't stop Anita from crying for long. I started reading Dr. Spock's book and followed it as my guide. Then the second miracle happened on September 30, 1955, when I gave birth to my son, William Leonard Christian. We called him Bill, and as a baby he was completely opposite from his sister. Bill was a quiet, peacefully calm baby.

During those years when my children were young, I did not work outside the home. Occasionally I took on a job that was like telemarketing, but I could make the calls on the list from my home at my convenience. We mostly, though, lived off of Les's salary at the GPO and from the money that he earned at the barber shop or while driving the cab. I wanted to watch and protect my children so that they would always feel safe. As my children grew I also enjoyed watching the differences in their personalities. Anita, who had cried so loudly as a baby, became very quiet and studious as she entered school. Bill, who had been quiet as a baby, captured everyone's attention as he jumped and flipped around the house. Sometimes, when Thelma's son Quen came to visit, the two boys would pretend to be Batman or Superman and act like

they were flying down the steps.

Everything in my life happened in a pattern of twos and fours. My grandmother had two children, Blanche and Brother, who were four years apart. My mother had two children, Hazel and me, and we were four years apart. Then I married Les who was four years older than I and we had two children, Anita and Bill, who are four years apart. That is the pattern for my family.

Blanche had diabetes and high blood pressure, so in 1951 she retired from the State Department. After her retirement she wanted to live away from the city where she could relax. On June 1, 1955, Hazel and Blanche sold Quincy Place and bought a house on Vista Street NE for $13,900. They put down $1000 and got two loans. Then due to effects from her diabetes, Blanche's health deteriorated, and she became less independent. Although Hazel lived with Blanche and could assist her, Hazel was still working. I was not working at the time, so I often brought Blanche to our house or went there to aid her. About a year later, Les and I agreed to move our family to Vista Street to help take care of Blanche since Hazel was going to work every day.

I always loved the enjoyment in life. Even with young children and an ailing mother, Les and I

did many pleasurable things together. We still loved to play cards, so in 1956 Les and I joined with five other couples to create a pinochle club called Chipenol. Members of our Chipenol Club were some of our closest, long-lasting friends: Blanche and Sonny Dade, Thelma and Jack Holland, Carrie Mae and Roy Brown, Evelyn and Julius Wilson, Dee and Harvell, and Gladys and Wilson Gale. We met monthly, rotating around to each of our homes, where the host provided dinner and set up for three card tables of foursomes. All of us had loads of fun playing cards, but we also did other things together and with our families, like going to the beach, taking trips, and having picnics. Chipenol was such a nice club with friends that helped each other and lent support even as members began dying out. I remained a member until it finally dissolved in 1983.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The People, Places, and Events in the Lives of

Anita Lynn Christian Lee

Evelyn Marian Shaw Christian

Genorah Broady Christian

Etta Coleman Pearson.



Anita at age 2



Anita at 5 months with Goldie



Barbara looking at Anita



Anita with Dad (Les) and Nina



William (Bill) at age 10



Sarita, Roger, Pamela, and Andre



Robert dating Anita in 1972



Robert, Anita, and Bill in 1973



Evelyn, Rob, Anita, Annie Mae



Brian, Erika, Grandma Genorah



Row 1: Erika, Evelyn, Anita

Robbie, Brian, John, Odell, Bill



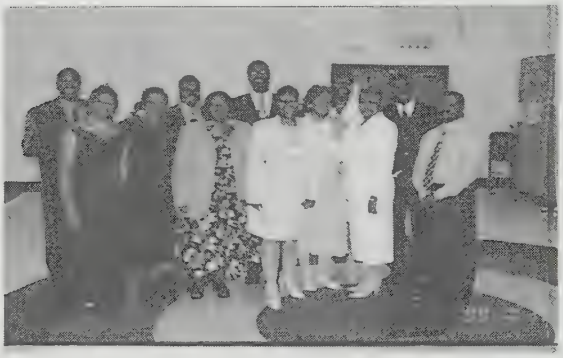
Robert, Erika, Anita, Brian



Cool Teens Brian and Erika



Emeka, Kenechi, and Kamara



Bill, Theresa, Goldie, Garry, Pamela, Andre, Donna, Anita, Linda,

Barbara, Roger, and Robbie



Erika, Kamara, Kenechi, Brian,

Emeka, and Robert



Evelyn V, Evelyn C, Donna,

Anita, Barbara, and Goldie



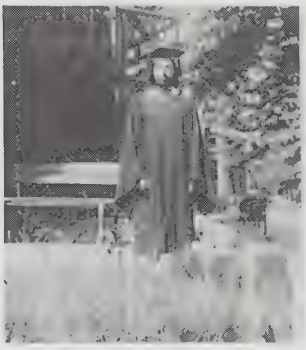
Evelyn at age 6



Blanche with the family's dog



Hazel, Brother (Thomas), Evelyn



Evelyn the Graduate



Always Fashionable Evelyn



Two Big Sisters Evelyn and Hazel



Evelyn and Les in 1943



Christmas Party for the Chipenol Club



Best Friends Evelyn and Thelma



Woodridge Homemaker's Club



Gail and Bill in 2002



Korynne and Edith



Annie Mae and Evelyn 2006



Kenechi, Emeka, Kamara 2009



Anita, Bill, Evelyn, Brian, Erika



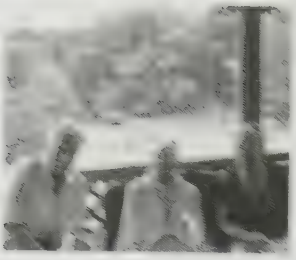
Samuel, Gail, Orlando, Bill



Genorah and Evelyn 1982



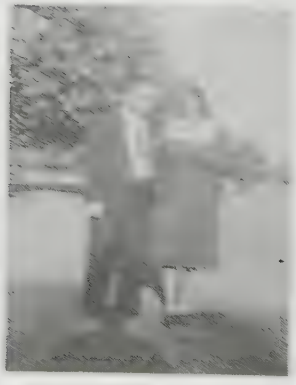
East Coast Family in California







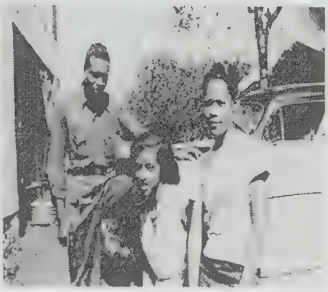




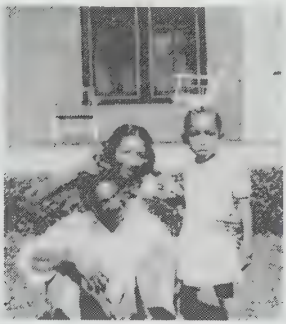




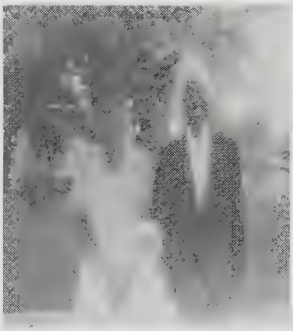
Ed and Alma



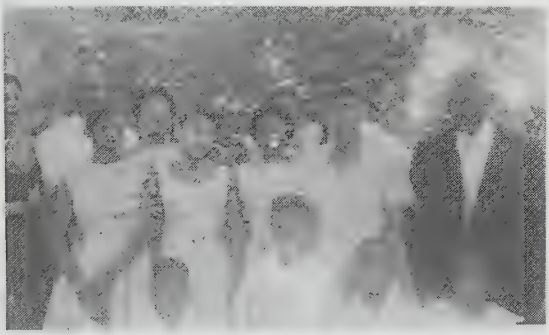
John, Jean, and Christine



Robbie, Evelyn C, Evelyn V



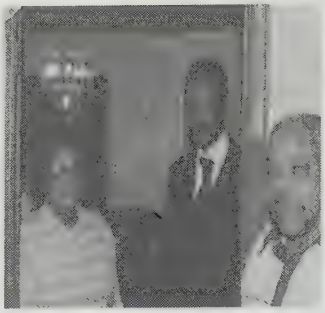
50th Anniversary Genorah and Tom



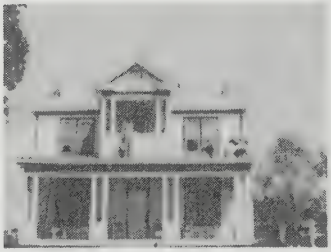
Family at the 50th Anniversay Celebration: Row 1: Bill, Anita, Andre, Pam; Row 2: Rose, Evelyn, Edith, Genorah, Tom; Row 3: Elizabeth, Les, Goldie, Sarita, Alma, John



Vanessa, Mary, and Esther



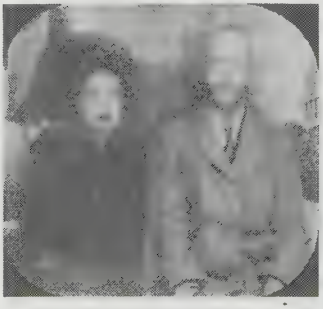
Esther, Odell, and Massie



Family painting house in Clifford



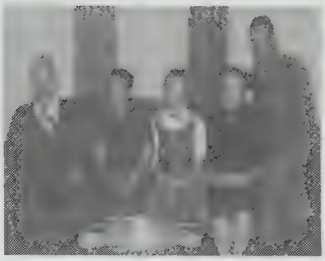
1985 "Down the Country"



Etta and Cordell in 1928



Mary and William



Cordell, Etta, Gladys, Louise, Ervan



Allen, Etta, Spencer



Spencer an honored Reverend



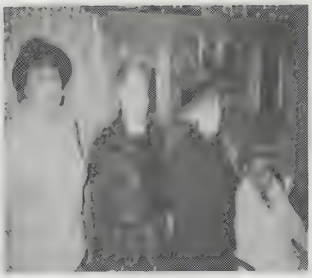
Ever Young Etta



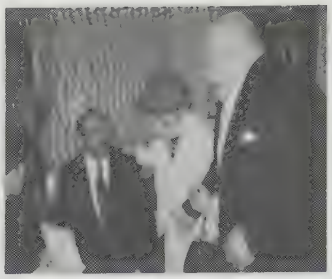
Sheri, Sandra, Louise, Kevin, Keith



Gladys, Kathy, June, Louise, Etta



Lenora, Diane, Annie Mae, Etta



Albert, Etta, Robert (Bob)



Gladys, Etta, Ervan, Louise



Elaine, Etta, Annie Mae

Celebrating Etta's 100th Birthday



Cordell and Etta in Canada



Elizabeth, Elwood, Evelyn, Lester



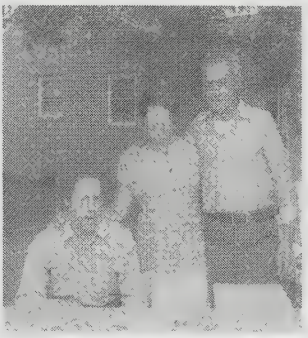
Shamica, Shannell, Lesli, Debbi, Gladys, Etta, Louise, Sandi, Sheri



Gladys, Lesli, Shannell, Debbi, Etta



Robbie, Audrey, a friend, James, Vanessa, Leslie, Elizabeth, Marlon



Robert, Annie Mae, Robert Sr.



Keith and Etta in 2004



Etta at age 108

9 INTERLACING BLESSINGS

***Anita Lynn Christian Lee*:**

I believe that things happened for a reason. Sometimes when I initiated things, everything fell into place and ran very smoothly. Other times when I pushed hard for something to happen and it didn't seem to go as I wanted, then I realized that I had to step back because obviously what I thought I wanted was not meant to be. Many of my blessings in life came when I followed that inner voice of The Lord speaking to me from within and guiding me to follow His lead. This I did through quiet prayer and meditation. I usually met with success when I was open to The Lord and followed His way. Meeting and marrying my husband, Robert, was one of those blessings.

I had been going with Robert for about four years when he asked me to marry him. That was soon after my father died, and his proposal really anchored me. I was so excited to marry Robert that I set the date for just a little more than six months away because I was afraid that if I delayed I would lose him. Robert was surprised that the wedding would be so soon and felt nervous and unready. He and I met

separately and together with Father Edward Albert Hughes, the pastor of my church, who counseled us. Father Hughes had been one of the priests who years before had performed an exorcism on a child in Mount Rainier (an event that became well-known through the movie, "The Exoricist"), and he always seemed to understand people and their needs, which was helpful for Robert and me. My mother went into quick action. She took me to a printer where I selected and ordered invitations, announcements, stationery, thank-you cards, and other items. She hired a catering company for the reception and went shopping with me for a wedding gown. Robert and I asked some of our family and friends to be part of the wedding party. Bridesmaids were my cousins, Pam and Sarita; Robert's sister, Diane; my soror, Diane; and my dear friend, Nina, as my matron of honor. Robert's groomsmen were his friend, Clint; his brother-in-law, John; my cousin, Roger; his close friend, Joe, as best man; and Joe's brother, James. Robert's niece Terri was the flower girl, and my brother Bill gave me away. My cousin Goldie, who was a wonderful seamstress, made all of the bridesmaids' dresses.

On Saturday, January 12, 1974, Robert and I got married at St. Francis de Sales Church. I felt that our marriage was a partnership of hearts, minds,

resources, and hard work. As we joined these forces together with deep spiritual guidance from God at the core, we were able to make shared goals and plans that could be executed successfully. Robert and I, who were from different backgrounds with different experiences, greatly loved and respected each other. Our wedding was big and beautiful but we really didn't have a honeymoon. We just went to our new apartment in Kaywood Gardens that Robert had spent the week setting up. We took a couple of days off from work but went back to our jobs by the middle of the week.

We saved our first big trip together for the summer when we were on vacation from teaching. That was when we flew to San Juan, Puerto Rico and St. Croix, Virgin Islands, where we spent a week. Everything was lovely there, and Robert and I really enjoyed it all. The weather was perfect the whole week. We went from the pool to the beach. When we swam in the Caribbean Sea, I was amazed at how clean and blue the water was. Various colorful tropical fish were swimming right around me in the water, and that was beautiful. Martha and Luther Edwards, who were in-laws on Robert's sister's side, lived in Questa Verde on St. Croix. Luther was an engineer for Hess Oil Company and had been sent there a few years earlier. We went to stay with them

and their children, and they were very gracious. It was nice having family on that paradise of an island because they showed us all around. One incident that was a little scary occurred when we went island hopping from St. Croix to Puerto Rico in a small prop plane. While we were up in the air, Robert looked out his window and said to me, "Look at that stream of liquid coming from the engine." Just about that same time one of the pilots got up and looked out of a window across from me and shook his head mumbling, "I guess we do have a leak." All ten of us passengers on the plane looked toward that window. I was quite nervous, but the pilot was acting as if it was nothing, and he started making a joke about it. Well, from that time on, I have never been fond of small propeller planes. I was happy to get on our big jet when we flew back home to Washington at the end of our trip.

Nineteen seventy-six was a magnificent year for us. Robert and I wanted children, and because of my Catholic background, we didn't use birth control. Two years after our marriage I was pregnant and ready to have our first child. We had been living in our one-bedroom apartment and thought that perhaps we should look at houses that were for sale. The first house that we looked at was at 3515 28th Street, NE, only four and a half blocks from my mother's house

and in the parish where I still belonged. It was in the Woodridge area of DC and on a street that I had admired while growing up because 28th Street ran just two blocks long from Rhode Island Avenue and Monroe Streets to Otis Street, with St. Joseph's Home standing as the main anchor on Otis facing the street. It held nicely maintained detached brick colonials with well-manicured yards. Once we went into the house I was really impressed with its size and the naturally stained crown and base molding throughout the house. There were three bedrooms and two and a half baths with one of those bathrooms in the master bedroom. Robert, though, fell in love with the huge solid walnut, antique, drop-pocket pool table with large sculptured legs that was in the basement. He asked, "Does the pool table come with the house?"

The real estate agent, Mrs. Mildred Veeney, replied, "I do believe that it will convey."

One added feature was a large attic that was partially finished but had no heat. I began having contractions when I went up to that third floor. That nice real estate agent asked me when the baby was due, and I said, "Any time now."

She said, "Well, we'd better go back downstairs."

I asked her how much the house cost, and Mrs. Veeney said, "$48,000."

Then Robert said, "Well, I guess that we can't buy it. We only have $28,000 saved up so far."

We actually got our first lesson in real estate from her. Mrs. Veeney explained that in buying a house conventionally, we would only need to put down 20% of the cost on the house and get a loan for the rest. She told us that we would not have to put down that much for this house because we could assume the owner's current loan balance of $9,000 at 6% interest, and the owner was willing to do a take-back loan at 9% interest, which was comparable to conventional loans. That was our first lesson in real estate, but Mrs. Veeney later said that she learned a valuable lesson in judging people that day too because when we first walked into the house she thought, "Poor kids! I know they can't buy this house. She's pregnant and he's so young. They can't afford it."

That night, as Washington was hit with a snow blizzard, I went into labor and getting to the hospital was an adventure. Robert maneuvered around streets with downed electrical wires and fallen trees to get me to Georgetown Hospital for the birth of our first child. Our lovely baby girl, Erika, was born on February 2, 1976.

While still in the hospital I told Robert, "I want that house."

He said "Okay, let's try to get it."

Robert called Mrs. Veeney, who agreed to meet us at the apartment the same day that Robert brought Erika and me home. On February 7 we brought our new baby girl home from the hospital and wrote an offer for our first house. Robert did one other thing that day. He sold his TR-6 sports car. We were excitedly ready for our growing family. Having a baby and buying a house at age 24 were big steps in my life, but I was mature and eager to move forward. Besides, helping hands were coming from all angles to assist with the move, the baby, and work at the new house. With the support of our friends and both of our extended families, it made things easier. My mother, Robert's parents, his sisters, my brother, and our in-laws, the Mont family all helped us tremendously.

The next few years were ambitious, multi-tasking feats. Robert was teaching and working full time at the C & P Telephone Company while I took maternity leave and stayed home with Erika for the first seven months of her life. It was beautiful talking to her, playing with her, and watching her develop. By the end of that school year, my mother, who had been teaching at John Burroughs School, retired to

take care of Erika when I went back to teaching. As I returned to the Episcopal Center that September, I also decided to pursue my master's degree since I had already taken a few graduate courses. So in the fall, I began working hard as a wife, mother, teacher, and student. Robert and I did some alterations to our new house. We put deep royal blue wall-to-wall carpeting on the first floor and going up the steps. We also carpeted the second and third floors. We put a space heater and window fan on the third floor to make it into a guest bedroom with two bunk beds, as well as a playroom for the children and a sitting room for adults. I even set up my study and office up there where I kept my records for school and home, organized our finances, and handled the household bills. We hired a contractor who gutted and remodeled the kitchen with new appliances, custom-built cabinets, and a booth style table that seated four. We also put a stove insert in the basement fireplace. Robert began buying tools and experimenting with his creativity in building and designing. He built a patio in the back yard and put a vinyl roof over it. The patio lasted, but the roof was destroyed by heavy wind and snow storms. He cut two openings in the basement knotty pine wood paneling to insert in the walls a built-in aquarium in the recreation room and a television in the sitting room area.

Things were a little more difficult for me because I had abnormal bleeding that the doctors could not resolve. A few months before I became pregnant with Erika, my menstrual period came on and would not stop. After three weeks I went to Freedman's hospital where I was given a Dilation and Curettage (D & C). I continued to spot bleed until my next period, and then heavy bleeding continued with only a few days during the month in which there was not bleeding. I had constant, painful periods of bleeding with thick clots until I got pregnant. My pregnancy was normal and all went fine until after Erika was born. Then I began long bouts of bleeding again. I had numerous D & C's, and by 1977 had lost so much blood from continuous bleeding that I became anemic. I took iron pills and on a few occasions I even had to get blood transfusions before getting the D & C's. Still, my aim was to not let the pain, discomfort, and bleeding have an effect on my activities and duties in life. The only relief from the abnormal bleeding was when I became pregnant with my second child. Again my pregnancy was smooth and uncomplicated, and the birth of our lovely son Brian on November 18, 1978, was normal. Brian was a happy baby, and his disposition was calm. His sister loved him and was quite excited that she had a baby brother. After Brian was born, I again took maternity

leave and stayed home with him and his two-year-old sister for the next five months while I enjoyed being a mother. I completed my master's program that year and was in the first graduating class of University of the District of Columbia. Erika entered a half day Montessori Program at John Burroughs School and enjoyed school. She had already begun reading books at age two and was eager to learn everything. Erika's mornings at school gave me a few hours of special time for Brian, like I had been able to give Erika when she was a baby. Soon after Brian was born, I again began having the heavy bleeding with thick blood clots that were painful as they came out. This condition was diagnosed as endometriosis. I had a wonderful Catholic doctor, Doctor Gleeson, who tried me on various medications in an attempt to control the bleeding, but nothing worked. I endured continuous heavy bleeding and numerous D & C's about every eight weeks throughout the next year and became very weak. After two years I had gone into the hospital over ten times, and Dr. Gleeson told me that I needed to think about a serious decision for my body and my life. He suggested that while there at Georgetown Hospital I have surgery which would resolve the endometriosis, and so I did.

In my life, circumstances were happening in twos. From the time I finished school, my life was on

a two-year schedule. Two years after I finished college and got my first teaching job, Robert and I got married. Two years later we had our first child, Erika, and bought our first house. Then two years after that we had our second child, Brian, and I graduated with my Master's Degree. Finally, within two years I was having a partial hysterectomy.

In 1979 while Erika and Brian were very young, my brother Bill took me to an unforgettable outing to see the Pope. We were all aware that Pope Paul II was visiting Washington and would be at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Bill was a graduate of Catholic University and was familiar with the schedule of events happening there. He did not have admittance tickets to the Mass at the Shrine but said that we would be able to see the Pope when he came out of the Mass. I was a little apprehensive about slipping out while the children were asleep, but Robert told me that he would watch the kids and I should definitely go to see the Pope. After all, it was not often that a Pope came to Washington, and here one was going to be just a few blocks from where we lived. Bill and a friend came to my house at about 4:30 a.m. so we could go early and get a good spot. It was cold that morning, and I wore boots and a coat. Bill had his backpack, his camera, and a blanket. I also brought a few sandwiches, fruit, and thermoses of

hot tea. We drove up Monroe Street to a parking lot on campus. We walked around until we found a nice spot right next to the front steps of the Shrine. Then we opened the blanket and sat there. We met many people and talked to them. Some were from the Washington area, but others were from various states and countries. By 6:00 a.m. the whole area surrounding The Shrine was crowded. People were singing songs, and we all joined in and sang. Most of the songs I knew from my church but I also learned a few others. As the sun got brighter and with the crowd still growing, I was feeling warmer as we continued to wait. I was not wearing a watch and was not particularly concerned with the time because I was really enjoying my outing. Suddenly someone shouted, "He's coming!" and everyone stood up and looked at the street. He and his whole entourage walked up the steps of the Shrine, past all of us waiting, and when the Pope reached the top he turned and blessed us. Then he walked into the doors, and we all stood there. While the Mass was going on, some people left and others moved in closer. We were able to move farther up the steps to the middle landing. I was just on the opposite side of the hand railing where the Pope had walked, and Bill was directly behind me. It was just over an hour when the doors opened again and everyone started moving

closer. Pope John Paul II stood at the top of the steps and said a prayer. Then he started down the steps. He surprised everyone when he walked over to the hand rail right where we stood. People were touching his robes, and Bill yelled, "Reach for him." I didn't, but he looked right in my face and smiled. I knew that I was blessed.

10 IRONING OUT PROBLEMS

Evelyn Marian Shaw Christian:

Even though by law segregation slowly came to an end, the attitudes of people were slower to change. I lived the first part of my life in segregation, but I never really understood or felt repercussions of prejudice while I was young because I was insolated by my family and neighborhood. Our community might have been segregated, but there was diversity and respect. Black teachers, janitors, doctors, messengers and charwomen all lived on the same block. People had businesses such as the barber, the ice man, or the coal man, or my friend's mother who had a diner. We supported the business people in our community, and they were quite successful. When I left the community I began to feel the sting of people's reactions to me. One day I went in a store downtown to get some hose. The store was big and beautiful. As I entered and went down a few steps, I saw an information person on the right. People were in a line to ask her for assistance, and I was the third person in the line. She was asking each person, "May I help you?" until it was my turn to be waited on. Then she looked past me and to the next person in line

behind me and said, "May I help you?" I didn't say anything, but she continued to overlook me and take other people; I was humiliated and felt like a fool. I turned around and walked out of the store. This was the first time that I felt the sting of prejudice.

The next time that I was in a store and a sales clerk disrespected me, I did begin to act like a fool. This time I was looking at irregular sheets that were on sale in the basement of The Hecht Company. Hecht's basement was the discount section of the store. I was looking at sheets that were marked irregular. I unfolded a few sheets to see what was irregular about them and I folded them back and put them on the table. Other people were doing the same thing, but a sales clerk came over to me and said, "Don't unfold these sheets." The lady grabbed one of the sheets and started walking off toward the folding room.

I was angry as I turned away from her and continued looking at the sheet that I had in my hand. Then I turned and followed the lady shouting, "I'll unfold them if I want to. How else can I see if I am going to buy it?"

The lady was shocked and walked faster to the next room where she shut the door. It was not my usual nature to be aggressive, but after I shouted and

held on to that open sheet, my anger subsided, and I realized that by using my voice and actions I could have a little more power or at least be feared.

By the time my son was old enough to go to school, I began pursuing a job again. I got my feet wet in the fall of 1959. Mrs. McKay, the mother of one of my friends in the neighborhood, asked me to substitute for a class in a school in Prince Georges County, Maryland. I thought I was ready, but I was so wrong. I didn't realize until I got there that the class was a social adjustment class. Well, that day as I tried to teach the lessons that were prepared, the students kept talking, walking around the room, and throwing spit balls. As much as I tried, I could not get those students to settle down and pay attention to a single lesson. As soon as I handled one disturbance, bedlam broke out on the other side of the room. That went on all day, and by the time I went home that evening, I felt down-right sick. All I could tell Les was, "What a day! I just want to climb in bed and not come out for a week."

At that time, schools had become desegregated and there were more openings in the DC Public School system. After I had already gained some experience by subbing a few times in DC and Prince George's County, in September 1960 I was able to get

a permanent position as a sixth grade teacher at John Burroughs Elementary School in DC.

I was so excited when I got that job that I went to the school three weeks before school was to open to fix up my room. I was given a basement room near the boiler room, and it had a few steps that led up to the playground. My room had not been used as a classroom and had many things stored there. I worked for days moving out items that didn't belong there and then washing everything that remained including the walls, boards, tables, shelves, cabinets, desks, chairs, and floors. Les helped me move the big items one day, and some days I brought Anita to help me wash and clean up the room before I began decorating the bulletin boards and creating it into a classroom. My final step was arranging the desks and tables in the room. When I finished I was really proud of my classroom. By then, it was a few days before the opening of school, so I walked around the building to meet other teachers who were working in their rooms. I met the man who taught in the only other classroom in the basement. He was the social adjustment teacher. I also met the other sixth-grade teachers and looked at their rooms. Then a teacher named Inez Woods came back to my room with me and graciously said, "Please don't take me wrong, but I have a suggestion. Classrooms are not set up in rows

anymore. Desks are put together so that the students sit in sectional groups. If you don't mind, may I help you rearrange the desks?" I was quite thankful for this advice and help. It had been many years since I had come out of college, and I was not up to date on the newest practices, but I was eager to learn. I was now ready for my first class. My first sixth grade class was a group of 43 children who had been transferred from Bunker Hill, a neighboring school. These children were very mature, and many were already teenagers. I told them, "You didn't come in here to play. You came here to learn, and I will be your teacher." I loved my class and let them know that they would learn much that year and be respectful. They did. There was one boy in the class who had a reputation of hitting a teacher at his former school. There was also one tall girl whose long braids the boys used to pull. One day she threw her arms back at those boys, and one boy flew across the room. It was the boy who had hit the teacher. I walked over to see if the child was all right. He brushed himself off and said that he was fine, but those boys didn't mess with that girl again. This class turned out to be great. They helped each other learn new things and were quite respectful. I loved that first class and every other class that I had after that. My favorite subject to teach was math. Eventually when classes

were departmentalized in my school, I taught Math to the four sixth-grade classes. John Burroughs was a very nice school with very nice children. I remained at the school throughout my tenure in the system and made many friends there.

My sister Hazel died on November 28, 1969, the day after Thanksgiving. She was 59 years old. Although Hazel and I were very close, we were opposites in many ways. We liked different types of music and hobbies. We had different personalities and different dreams. Hazel was like a tragic hero who was nice and good to others but experienced much pain and suffering. She had married twice looking for happiness. My sister was a sweet person who deserved a beautifully fulfilled life, but she died relatively young. After eating dinner, she went to the first floor bedroom of Vista Street. She was there just about fifteen or twenty minutes when I heard her calling my name. As I walked into the room, I saw her sitting on the side of the bed and she said, "Oh my God!" Then a glorious, peaceful calm came over her face as she slumped over. I sat beside her and held her as she passed away. I called an ambulance and her doctor, who was just a few blocks away. Her doctor declared that she died of pernicious anemia.

Although Les became ill a few years later, he

never told us how much pain he was in. Then in 1972, soon after his father died, Les found it difficult to eat. The doctor told him that he had indigestion, so he kept taking Milk of Magnesia. He said that it hurt when he ate anything, so he stopped eating. I tried to give him liquid shakes and pureed some foods for him, but that didn't help. He became weaker and weaker. This went on for months, and even though we kept going back to the doctor it seemed that the doctor was doing very little to help him. Les would curl up in pain and had trouble sitting, walking, or even sleeping, but when anyone came around, he would smile and try not to show them how much he hurt. Les had always been the main support for his family, and it was hard for him not to be strong. Les's niece Barbara was a nurse at Freedman's Hospital, and she recommended that I take Les to Dr. Linzau, an outstanding young doctor at the hospital. I was able to get an appointment that week, and the doctor immediately put him in the hospital. It was near the end of April, and Les was diagnosed with esophageal cancer. When they opened him up the surgeon said that the cancer had spread throughout his body and it would not be of any benefit to operate. Les had lost so much weight and had been in so much pain that now the only thing the doctors could do to help him was give him medication to ease the pain. Every day

after work I would go to the hospital to be with Les, to hold him and soothe him. Les passed on May 30, 1973, in the middle of the night. A doctor from the hospital called and said before Les died he said, "Tell Evelyn that I can't hold on any longer."

When one door closes, another one opens. Bill graduated from high school the day after Les's funeral and was preparing for college at Catholic University. Anita, who had been teaching for a year, was planning to marry her boyfriend, Robert Lee, in January. After Les's funeral I felt in a daze, but I was glad to be busy with preparations for my children. Then in the fall of 1973 when I went for a check-up, Doctor Linzau said, "The lab results were positive for colon cancer." These words knocked all of the wind out of me, and I sat there stunned. Lord knows how I was able to drive home that day from that doctor's office! By the end of the week, though, I was in the hospital. My operation was quite successful and after a section of my colon was removed, I felt blessed that no reoccurrence of cancer ever showed up in my body again. Having that operation also cured me of something else. While in the hospital I kept asking the nurses for my cigarettes and an ash tray. Not one nurse ever obliged me. Even when I asked my family for cigarettes, they told me to wait and talk about it with the doctor. That went on for a couple of days

until one morning my doctor asked me how I was doing. I told him that I was feeling fine but that no one would give me cigarettes.

My doctor simply said, "Perhaps there is a reason that they don't want you to have them."

Underneath, I knew the reason, but I just had not wanted to face it. That day was the last time that I asked for or wanted a cigarette. Having that operation for cancer had also helped me quit the habit of smoking.

I retired from teaching in 1976 when my granddaughter, Erika, was born. Over the next nine years, I enjoyed caring for Erika and her brother, Brian, during the day while my daughter Anita and my son-in-law Robert taught school. Those grandchildren grew up fast. Before I knew it, Erika married and had three children of her own: Emeka, Kenechi, and Kamara. My son Bill waited until later in life to marry, but he and his wife Gail had two children: Samuel and Orlando.

Bill lived at home while he was in college and graduate school, and his presence was a support for me. He worked on Capitol Hill as a clerk in Congress's Office of Research and Registration soon after he finished school. As he began his professional

career, he continued to live at home and worked in the area. He worked as an actor in local theaters and was the host on a children's TV show in DC called "It's Elementary." When he decided to move to New York to further his acting career, I didn't want him to leave. I was very sad and thought that I would be lonely, but I didn't want him to know how I felt, so I encouraged him to follow his dream. I was happy that I did because he landed the role of Derek Frye on All My Children, and he kept that role for 17 years. I was a very lucky mother because when Bill was nominated for an Emmy Award, he took me to the award ceremony where I met many actors, including Oprah Winfrey. Even after Bill moved to Los Angeles, he remained on that show and traveled every week to New York for tapings, until he decided that his sons needed him fulltime in California.

I was glad when Bill got married on November 2, 2004. He was almost 50 years old, but his wait paid off because he married Gail, a lovely young lady from California, who was a perfect partner for him. My prayers for my son had been answered. Not only did Anita, Brian and I travel to the big affair, but his Aunt Edith, many cousins, and friends from the east coast also went there to be with Bill.

I always believed in doing for others and

helping in the community. I tried to assist my family in any way that I could. I guess I began learning those values when I was very young. I had to help my grandparents as they got older and had to help Brother Frank and my cousin when they were sick. For many years I volunteered at my church, St. Francis de Sales. I was a lector and Eucharistic Minister who assisted during Mass and took communion to the sick. I was on the Parish Council and the Finance Committee. I was a member of the Legion of Mary, the Sodality, and a Renew Prayer Group. I took on leadership roles as president of the Sodality and the Parish Council, as well as chairperson of the retreat committee. I even volunteered as a docent at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. I was also active with the Woodridge Civic Association and the Woodridge Homemakers' Club. I definitely appreciated my life and felt that I had many blessings.

I stayed active most of my life because I loved to be on the go. I enjoyed traveling by car, train, ships, and planes with my friends and my family. My first trip out of the country was to Niagara Falls soon after Les and I married. In 1969 Les and I took Anita, Bill, and Pam on a cruise to Nassau and Freeport with some members of St. Francis de Sales. One of my favorite trips was to Hawaii. I also liked the cross country train trip that our pinochle club took to

various cities, including Las Vegas and San Francisco.

Old age has a way of creeping up on even the best of us. I lived alone in my house after my son moved away. I just stayed involved and active and life went on. I had some illnesses, but they didn't get me down for long. One of the most excruciating pains I felt was from shingles, which I experienced when I was eighty-five years old, but after about six weeks I got over that. Even as I went through painful bouts of gout and two incidents of mini strokes during my eighties, when I had problems I just ironed them out and I kept going. I continued to stay active in my church, travel, play cards, dance, and drive all around the city until I was ninety-one years old. Then in late December 2005, I went down the basement and started washing my hair in preparation for Bill, Gail and their baby son, Samuel, to come from California for Christmas. When I turned around from the sink, my foot gave way and I fell to the floor. I couldn't move my leg so I just lay there. I knew that I had to reach the phone which was on the wall in the next room so I dragged myself across the floor and pulled myself up on the chair under the phone just enough to dial "O."

The operator came on and asked, "What city please?"

I said, "I've fallen and need to reach my daughter Anita at Shepherd Elementary School in Washington, DC." I also asked her to reach my son-in-law Robert at his office at his school. The operator did so, and quite quickly both Robert and Anita got to the house at the same time. They called the ambulance, and when I went to Providence Hospital the doctor said that my hip was broken and I had to have an operation to replace it. My nephew Roger and his wife Olivia came to see me before I went to surgery. I remained in the hospital for about two weeks as Christmas and New Year's passed me by. I was then moved to a Holy Cross Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. My niece Goldie was my last visitor at Providence and my first visitor at Holy Cross.

After my extensive hospital and rehabilitation stay, which helped me progress from a wheelchair to a walker and finally to a three-prong cane, I was able to come home by the end of January. I attended physical therapy and went to Dr. Brian Ashton, one of Bill's good friends, who was a chiropractor. I worked quite hard to recover from this setback and began to walk with just a simple cane and then around the house with no cane. I even studied to take the written and road exams and had my medical doctor and ophthalmologist fill out the forms which, because of

my age, DC required for renewal of my driver's license. I passed the road and written exams, and my doctors signed the form for my license renewal. Then my eye doctor said that I had a cataract and asked if I wanted to get it removed. I decided to do so because my eyesight was getting very bad, and I was not feeling comfortable driving anymore. After the surgery, my eyesight still was not clear, and the doctor said that because of the previous stroke, there was residual effect in that eye. So I decided that even though I had an active driver's license, I would not drive. I would stay right at home until someone took me out. Anita and Robert came over every few days and called me twice a day. They took me to the grocery store, to the doctors' offices, to church, and any place else that I needed to go. One day I used Metro Access to go to my doctor, but when I was ready to go back home Metro Access kept me waiting outside the doctor's office for hours, even though the receptionist kept calling for them to return to take me home. After that, they wrote to me and said that their operating system had improved, but I never used Metro Access again.

Throughout my life I knew that I received blessings and that I was a survivor. I survived a serious infection when I was a child. I survived being around tuberculosis without any effects when I was a

young adult. I survived cancer during my middle-age years. Then in my nineties, I survived four major falls and a hip replacement. I am so thankful that I lived to see so much: my family's growth, the end of segregation, and different young people learning to love and respect each other. I guess God kept me here for a purpose.

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

When Evelyn finished her story, she wiped away the tears in her eyes. I asked her why she was crying and she said, "As the story of my life ran before my eyes, I realized that I had many memories that I hadn't thought about for years. In fact, I had almost forgotten many things. Some were secrets of our family. Most of my secrets I had pushed up my sleeve years ago, like my dirty tissues or handkerchief, and I was never to pull them out around other people. Some were things that I never wanted to remember, some that I never wanted to forget.

Evelyn enjoyed living with Robert and me for over five years. She traveled with us, and participated in many activities with her friends and ours. She was wholeheartedly embraced each time she attended

Mass at her church, St. Francis de Sales, but was also welcomed as she worshiped in my church, Christ the King, or our parish church of St. Peter in Olney. Then, while surrounded by family after a brief stay at Providence Hospital due to a stroke, Evelyn peacefully passed away on April 11, 2013. She was 98 years old.

11 MOVING ON PINS AND NEEDLES

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

Most people had various hobbies. My parents liked to travel. They also enjoyed music. They loved to dance and were so good that they won a dance contest when we were in Nassau. Their favorite hobby, though, was playing cards, and they were in a pinochle club that met monthly for over 20 years. Mom taught Bill and me how to play the game, and we could play single and double-deck pinochle quite well, but I never really thought of myself as a card player. My hobbies as a young adult were slightly different. I loved things that I could do alone, such as reading and writing, but I also liked social activities in which I felt that I could be helpful to others. For years I had been a young Sodalist at St. Francis de Sales, and together with a few other young Sodalist friends, I began a project of reaching out to the elderly. Our group of eight young adults of both sexes began visiting the shut-ins and transporting the elderly to church activities. Robert didn't join the Sodality but helped me with the projects.

In November 1980 when our children were young, Robert and I joined with two other couples, who were our close friends, to form a club. James and Josephine Mont, Vaughn and Judy Kimbrough, and Robert and I created Upward Trend for Families. We were three couples with young children who decided to meet monthly to discuss issues that affected our lives and ways to keep our family life strong. These issues ranged from child-rearing and the family to developments in the community and the world. We also utilized the resources of positive family programs and activities in the Washington area and beyond. We took our families to annual performances at Howard University and got season tickets to theater and concert performances for children at the Kennedy Center. We took annual ski trips in the Catskills, and sponsored a picnic each summer at various locations, but mostly at Solomon's Island. We went to Sesame Place, Virginia Beach, and many other places. We also provided meals for families in need during the holidays and donated toys to George Washington Hospital's children's ward. Our club grew quickly as more parents heard about it, and our club is still strong and active after over 30 years.

Like my parents, I enjoyed traveling as a hobby. One year Robert and I decided to take a cruise to Nassau. We told members of the club about it, and

James and Josephine decided to go with us. We all had fun. We went to the shows, ate the grand feasts each day, danced at the Captain's Ball, and explored the island. Robert even won a trophy for first place in a table tennis contest. One day Robert decided to go snorkeling in the coral reefs, so he got dropped off by a small boat's captain in the middle of the ocean; but he got sun burned waiting for the boat to come back and pick him up. He was so burned that he got sick and couldn't eat on the last day. Although that trip was just a few days long, the skin on Robert's back was peeling for weeks. Still, we enjoyed traveling with our friends and club members.

Good friends often kept me on my feet, but tragedy had a way of completely knocking me off guard and changing my equilibrium. I had been deeply affected by the deaths of Nana and my father, but the death of my dear friend, my matron of honor, my confidant, Nina, really shocked me. On the evening of July 21, 1983, Aunt Thelma called and somberly said that Nina and Julian's plane had crashed in a marsh near the Delaware Bay and they did not survive. The news was unbelievable. How could they be dead? At 32 years old, Nina and her husband Julian had so much life ahead of them. They had two small daughters, and the younger one was just a year old. How could they be dead? After all,

Robert and I had just been with them a few days before when Julian invited us to go on this trip with them. Julian had his pilot's license, and they often rented planes to take trips. That day Julian piloted, and another couple accompanied Nina and Julian. As they were traveling, though, a storm arose and overtook the plane. All four of them died. It was really hard to lose a good friend. Our family tried to be supportive to her family as they dealt with this double blow. I was amazed at how strong Nina's parents were. Aunt Thelma and Uncle Jack did not seem to mourn outwardly but began making plans, not only for the double funeral of their daughter and son-in-law, but also for the upbringing of their two young grandchildren, Letisha and Melinda. In fact, both sides of their families worked together in laying the foundation of support for those children so that they were surrounded by love. Although death knocked a mighty blow and the world seemed to be off balanced, with time steadiness returned.

I understood the importance of ownership, but understanding the business of real estate was a growing process. Both Robert and I took a real estate course at University of Maryland in the early 1980's because we both saw how valuable real estate was economically. The most important thing that we learned from this course was location, location,

location. I even took the Maryland and DC real estate license tests and obtained licenses in both jurisdictions. My next big teacher in real estate was Mr. Theodore Wade, who gave me my first opportunity in the real estate business. Mr. Wade was not only a friend of my parents but also a kind and easy-going real estate broker and a licensed appraiser who owned his own business. He was already retired from the federal government and worked in real estate part-time. Although he did not have the new tool of computer-generated multiple listing, he was a well-seasoned broker and appraiser. He really helped me and took me under his wings, explaining some aspects of the market to me, such as how houses were appraised, how to list a house, how to write a contract, and how to finalize a sale. At that time I was both the sellers' and the buyers' agent in some homes because there was no separation of powers. During the two years that I worked part-time as a real estate agent with Wade Realty, I held open houses and met with clients when people called to go see a house. I, though, was still a teacher by day and a mother of young children in the evening. Robert did not want me to meet people at houses in the evening unescorted, so many times Robert and the children would accompany me to the houses. Other times the open houses and meetings were arranged when Mr. Wade or another

agent could also be there. My philosophy was that a house should be able to sell itself, and the agent should just help the buyers and sellers through the process. I was able to bring in some listings and sell some homes, but after a few years I realized that the business of selling was not for me because I was not aggressive at it. However, I did learn much more about real estate and the values of homes in different parts of the city.

By 1986 Robert and I realized that we ourselves needed to invest in a different house in a different location. When we first bought we never realized that a tourist home, with transient people coming there day and night, was located on Rhode Island Avenue at the end of the alley from our house. We also didn't know that a rooming house, filled with different families in each room, was next door to the tourist home, and at night we would see children sneak into our yard and take our children's toys. We didn't understand that because St. Jude's Medical Center, which was next door and had no parking lot, people who came there would fill the parking spaces on the street during business hours. We further never fathomed that this medical center would place trash receptacles with hazardous waste next to the alley that was adjacent to our yard. Both Robert and I had taught in Northwest Washington and wanted to

relocate to that part of the city. We thought that the environment would be good for our young children, and the value of people's properties would be well insulated from some of the things that we felt deteriorated the value of our present property. We put our house up for sale and, before we even found another house that we wanted to buy, our house sold for over twice what we had paid for it.

The Episcopal Center for Children (ECC) was an ideal place to teach. The school had a mission, and each person working there cooperated and coordinated with one another in carrying out that mission of educating, as well as providing emotional and social development to its students and their families. The administration and staff were so supportive that working there felt like being a part of one great big family. When I began teaching at ECC I was a classroom teacher making a salary of $6,800 a year. After I received my Master's in reading, I became the reading specialist, and my salary had increased to over $11,000 a year by 1980. In my class each day I worked with small groups and individual students, calmly helping them to learn and enjoy the process of learning. I loved reading and always rejoiced when children found satisfaction in reading or listening to stories. The warmth of staff and the care for the educational, social, psychological, and physical

upbringing of children that was shown at The Episcopal Center made it an ideal model of a school that launched my teaching career.

Although I was very content working at ECC, I made another important decision in my life in 1986 when opportunity knocked and I answered. One summer day while I was renewing my teaching certification, a person in the office of certification said that the DC Public Schools were recruiting new teachers, and there was a possibility that I would get credit for up to ten years of teaching experience. I decided to participate in the interview process and was offered a classroom teaching position at a choice of three schools. I would start at a Step 10 with the salary of over $30,000. This was a big jump from what I was making at ECC, but what was more enticing was the civil service defined benefits retirement program that the job would provide. One of the interviewers, Mrs. Ross, suggested that I call Alexander R. Shepherd Elementary School and meet with its principal, but as soon as I got home that evening, Shepherd's principal called me. She asked me to come to the school so that she could interview me. I decided to pursue that school since it was in the community where Robert and I were presently looking at houses to relocate our family. I met with Mrs. Edith R. Smith, principal of Shepherd, in her

office the next day. She described the many accomplishments of the school and its staff, as well as the support of the wonderful families in that community. As I heard about the school, its students, and the community, I was eager to teach there. Mrs. Smith asked about my family, and I told her that my children attended Blessed Sacrament. I also told her that my husband and I were looking for a house in the neighborhood. I didn't tell her that we had placed an offer on a house just across the street from the school. Mrs. Smith not only invited me to teach there but also said that she would make an opening for my children to come to the school. It was the middle of July, and I thoughtfully decided to make this big change in schools for September. I was excited but also a little sorry to leave ECC. That year I made great career and housing moves that had wonderful consequences.

I was nervous when I first started teaching in public school because it was quite different. I had a combination 5th and 6th grade class, and I had to quickly learn both curricula and plan strategies to help students in both grade levels master the skills that they needed. I also was apprehensive about classroom control. Even though I had taught for 14 years at ECC, I always had small groups and had the support of counselors if students needed a time out of class. In public school I had class sizes of 26 to 28 students,

and I needed to find my own strategy for managing the class climate and everyone's learning. I had a bit of growing to do, and I immediately began doing so.

That year of 1986, our family had new beginnings. In September, I not only started teaching at Shepherd ES, but Erika and Brian transferred to that school at the same time. Robert had been going to auctions and bidding on houses because he thought that we could get a good deal that way, but the banks would always be his biggest competitor and raise the bids beyond what he wanted to pay. Then about a week after school opened, Robert placed and won a sealed bid offer for $147,000 on a house at 7916- 16th Street through a Veteran's Administration Auction.

Buying this house taught us much. The house was in deplorable condition because there was a hole in the roof over the den, and when it rained water poured in and had ruined some of the floors and walls. The house had an awful, mildewed smell, which was sickening. Besides, animals, such as squirrels, were coming in and out of the house through the visible holes. With the condemnable condition, the bank did not want to lend us the money for the house unless we let them hold $15,000 that couldn't be touched until we fixed up the house and it passed inspection. There were many things that needed to be done to the house,

but we felt that once the house was remodeled, it would be a great house in which to live and the location would make it a great investment. In December, we went to settlement on that house, which was just three blocks from Shepherd School.

Sometimes life was like walking on pins and needles because I always had to make careful moves. It seemed that timing and decisions were everything. I felt that I happened to go for recertification at just the right moment and then made the right choice to change. By moving to the DC Public Schools that year, I was one of the last to be placed in the civil service defined benefits retirement program because that was the final year for entering it. I realized that by buying back ten years of service in that retirement program to correspond to my work experience credit, I would be able to retire with 30 years of service and full benefits at age 55. Besides, since I would also keep the money in my ECC retirement, I would then have two retirements. Also, by buying a foreclosed house on one of the nicest streets in the city, Robert and I had made a great economic investment. At that time Robert and I had a good income because both of us were teaching in the DC Public Schools, and Robert also was an instructor in adult education at night. We had a considerable amount in savings, in addition to the $50, 000 that we put down on the

house and the $15,000 that the bank held. We hired Mr. Smith, a general contractor, who for $20,000 was able to make that house sparkle from top to bottom. He put in a brand new kitchen; laid ceramic tile in the foyer; fixed the roof, the floors, and the walls; painted; and eliminated all possibility of mold and mildew. We then paid a plumber to change our furnace from oil to gas, and we bought a new gas water heater. We put a new washer and dryer in the basement. We also hired my Uncle John to put in wall-to-wall carpeting on the first and second floors. After inspection, the bank readily released our money and we moved into the house on the first day of February in 1987. What we learned was that for us it was important to continue to build our own diversified investment resources in order to make moves that we needed, rather than plan to depend on loans from a bank. Our four-bedroom, 3 ½ bath colonial on 16th Street was lovely with its large rooms and cozy first floor library and study, but improvements were ongoing. Robert really began to hone his carpentry skills and eventually enclosed the porch off of the living room to create a family room. He also put an addition onto the kitchen to create a breakfast room. Then he landscaped the front and back yard so that our house looked like a picture from *Better Homes and Gardens*. The best feature that he put in the back

yard was a pond filled with koi and lilies. Brian and Brian's friends, James and Lawrence, helped Robert with some of the building and digging.

In 1987, I got introduced to the Paideia Program through my principal, Edith R. Smith, and Lynda Tredwey, a Shepherd parent who became the Paideia Coordinator for DC Schools. I embraced the program because I believed in Mortimer Adler's educational philosophy of education being a lifelong process of learning for everyone. Paideia encouraged multidiscipline, multisensory, multi-approached exploration based on each child's natural learning style and interests, which facilitated learning for all children. This was the approach that I incorporated throughout my teaching career in the DC Public Schools. I attended workshops and classes based on the Paideia Proposal, and within a few years I became a citywide facilitator with Lynda in providing workshops for teachers who wanted to use Paideia's Socratic method of extended open discussions. I received funds through *Washington Post Grants in Education* as I expanded the program in my class and my school. I received a *Teacher-to-Teacher Grant* to expose the program to other DC schools. I also received a *Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Fellowship* that allowed me to travel to Paideia workshops and meetings in various locations, including the

University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, and the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. It also enabled me to participate in a summer-long program at St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I received many other awards and grants while working in the DC Public Schools, and I used the money and knowledge that I gained to provide greater resources for the students in my class, my school, and other schools in the city.

My growth was ongoing throughout my years of teaching in the DC Public Schools. During my 22 years at Shepherd Mrs. Edith R. Smith, Mrs. Judy Williams, Dr. Katherine James, and Mr. Dan Robinson were the four dedicated principals who kept the school on a leading edge within the city and provided me with much personal growth. I had the opportunity to be a classroom teacher at the sixth, fifth, fourth, and third grade levels, as well as multilevel combinations of those grades. I also had the opportunity to enjoy teaching children of all ages at the school as the language arts teacher and reading specialist. For many years I cooperated with various local colleges and universities in supervising student teachers, and I also was a mentor teacher to new teachers because I felt that it was important to encourage people to be zealous about their vocation as a teacher. I knew that DC offered a wealth of

learning for its children, and I was eager to help students embark on that road of continual growth. I enjoyed my work as a teacher and I enjoyed being involved with extracurricular activities that I thought were important for children. Because I used the city itself as a classroom, my students went on many field trips throughout the city to broaden their cultural, political, and historical understanding. By way of subway, buses, cars, and on foot, we took field trips to museums, performances, libraries, and nature centers. My sixth graders also enjoyed being a part of the Embassy Adoption Program and learned extensively about a different country that adopted them each year. My fifth graders enjoyed the real world scientific exploration of The Jason Project. My fourth graders became engrossed in their year-long group projects of designing, creating, and promoting their own invention that would solve one of the current day's problems and be helpful for the future. My third graders were fascinated with an architectural exploration and study program sponsored by The National Cathedral. At all grade levels my students were invited to experience, read, explore, gather information from various sources, discuss, problem solve, evaluate, and write about their thoughts within the process of learning. For many years I coordinated the Spelling Bee and the National Geographic Bee at

Shepherd. As a coach I loved to see children explore the origin of words or the relationships of countries. I also coordinated all-day reading, writing, and dramatic literary festivals at our school involving all teachers and staff, as well as many parents and volunteers from every class. I encouraged children to write poems, essays, and stories and enter them in citywide and national contests. During my career in DC Public Schools, I put my heart and soul in teaching because I believed that as a teacher I was inviting others to learn by exploring problems and taking up challenges that needed to be solved. I felt that I was therefore aiding in the development of responsible citizens who would continue to improve our world with their own thoughts, questions, and strategies for seeking answers. Before I retired, I had one more new experience when I took on the role of being the coordinator for the new Primary Years Programme that the school was implementing. Being in the DC Public Schools expanded my opportunities to learn and grow.

Our family traveled to Canada a few times, but during the summer of 1990, the year that Brian finished sixth grade, Robert and I took our children on their first trip to Europe. We flew to England and stayed in London for three days. From there we took a 14-day bus tour to 11countries in Western Europe.

Robert loved the few days that we spent sightseeing Paris and going up the Eiffel Tower. I enjoyed the beautiful Black Forest in Germany at the lovely inn where we stayed during our first night on the mainland. I also loved all aspects of being on The Alps from the few days that we spent in a chalet near Lucerne, Switzerland, to three days in a family-oriented, mountainous inn in Austria with its goats and hens that provided fresh milk and eggs for our breakfast. Erika and Brian loved the independence that we allowed them as we traveled because they got to explore and shop on their own. The people on the tour with us came from various parts of the world, including Australia, Japan, Canada, USA, and even countries in Europe. Since we traveled via motorcoach with these people, we all became friendly and everyone looked out for each other. Two other families had children, and our children enjoyed being with them. One girl spoke only French, so since Erika, who was entering ninth grade, had taken French for two years, she enjoyed communicating through play and conversation with her. As we traveled along the way, the tour guide told us historical and geographical information about each country. He also asked geographic questions in the form of contests, and Brian, one of the youngest on the trip, won every contest. The tour guide and other adults from Europe

were impressed and wanted to know how he knew so much information about those countries. Brian said, "I learned geography in school." I was quite proud of our DC Public School's social studies program and the effort of teachers at Shepherd who had encouraged broad connections in learning. Others did not know about that little cog in the wheel. In the big scheme, when Brian displayed his knowledge in front of those adults from various countries, he made all of our schools in the USA look great. On the bus I also got to read a few books, including Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. We also went off on our own to explore certain places. We took the Metro in Paris, gondolas in Venice, the train in Munich, and taxis in London. Along our way throughout Western Europe we saw shows, went to restaurants, visited museums, took pictures at historical sites, and did a little shopping in each country. At that time, each country had its own currency, so we used the money exchange a bit. That was the most extensive family trip that we took, and I loved it because we were able to discover and learn together.

A Fork in the Road

I'm lost again,

Standing at a fork in the road

And unclear in which direction to proceed.

While planning my advancing move,

I stare as far as I can in each direction

And study each course with its turns, bumps and ruts.

I pray for guidance.

Then cautiously but with more resolve

I set forth on my journey.

12 SEWING PATCHES OF MEMORIES

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

On a mild October day in 2009, Robert, my mother, and I went to visit Aunt Etta to bring her greetings and a present in celebration of her 105th birthday. She was sitting in her bedroom armchair and was quite happy to see us. Aunt Etta was my husband's great-aunt and the matriarch of that side of the family. She was the archivist who kept pictures of family members, cards and letters that they had written, and information or articles about their achievements. Whenever family and friends came to visit her, Aunt Etta shared some of her story. It was a story that she was proud for others to hear because it was her journey in life.



Etta Coleman Pearson:

I was born on October 18, 1904. That was 105 years ago. My mama, Mary Elizabeth Washington Coleman, was from Falls Church, Virginia. My mother was raised by her mother and stepfather, Ampy Byrd. Mama became a midwife and often took her black bag to deliver babies all around the area. She was well known and well liked because she was kind and comforting as she helped women. Sometimes when she was summoned day or night to be with those women, she stayed for many long hours. When each of her children was born, she did not go a hospital. In fact, I was born in a house in the

Kenilworth area of DC where my parents were living. Since mama helped to bring so many babies into this world, I suppose when I was born she didn't need a doctor.

My papa, William Coleman, was from Haiti. His grandfather sailed on a ship going back and forth to many places. His mother brought him to the United States when he was a little boy. She met and married a man who was a blacksmith from Richmond, so they lived there. Papa grew up in the Richmond and Caroline County areas of Virginia. He had other brothers and sisters, and I believe their children or children's children remained in that area, but I never really knew Papa's family. The only thing that I knew was that his mother died early and he met a cousin who was a minister in Arlington, so he moved there.

I had three brothers and one sister: Willie (whom we called Billy), Lenora, Spencer, and Allen. Lenora and Billy were older than I, and Spencer and Allen were younger, so I was the middle child. We grew up understanding the strength of family support. Our parents were firm and strict, but they never spanked us. Mama and Papa taught us the value of working hard, helping others, and praising The Lord. My earliest memory was when I was about eight years old. We were living on a farm, and Papa loved

farming. There were many chores to be done. The boys mainly did outside work, and I worked inside. Since my sister was already married and not at home, I was given the tasks of cooking and cleaning, especially when Mama was away delivering babies. Papa was the one who taught me how to cook. Sometimes, Papa even had me working outside with my brothers, and I didn't like it. At that age, I really didn't like doing any of those chores. I just wanted to play, but I wouldn't dare let Papa know how I felt. Instead, when Papa said to do something, I said, "Yes, Papa."

While we were growing up, Mama and Papa always taught us about the Lord, and we attended the Baptist church that had been built in 1870 on land donated by our family. We all learned to play the piano and sing, and we were part of the choir at church. When I was a teenager we moved to Arlington, and I met a young man there. I went with him to a Methodist church, and it was there that I first felt the calling to join church. I attended that church for a while but decided that I wanted to remain a Baptist as my family had been. It was then that I was baptized in the Second Baptist Church of Falls Church, Virginia, where my parents had been baptized and were still members. I became very active in the choir there. Our upbringing had a profound effect on

my family and we tried to be good Christians. I grew up with the conviction not to drink alcohol or smoke and I never did. This strong background also probably helped to guide two of my brothers, Spencer and Allen, down the right path because they both answered The Lord's call and become ministers.

Since my sister, Lenora, was much older than I was, it seemed to me that ever since I could remember she was grown. While Lenora was seventeen, she met Daniel Pearson when he came around to do some work for Mama. Dan and Lenora fell in love. Before I turned ten years old, my sister had married Daniel Pearson and moved to Baltimore, Maryland. Although I didn't get to see my sister often, I did look up to her and enjoyed when she came around. Sometimes, some of Dan's family, including his younger brother Cordell, would also come over. Lenora and Dan had two children: Annie Mae, who was born in Baltimore; and Robert Daniel Pearson (Bob), who was born in Arlington. My mother delivered both of my sister's children.

When I was in my early twenties I began dating Cordell Pearson, Dan's younger brother. He was a fine man who was able to build and could fix anything. Papa liked him, and I was very happy when he asked me to marry him. On September 1, 1927, I

married Cordell Pearson. It may have been a coincidence or it may have been fate, but the Coleman and Pearson families crossed twice since my sister Lenora and I married two Pearson brothers.

I lost my sister around that same time that I fell in love and married Cordell. Lenora and Dan were happy and had a lovely family, but Lenora died suddenly of indigestion when her daughter Annie Mae was seven years old and her son Bob was five.

Dan moved near his mother and father so that he could have support in raising his two young children while he was working. Then he took them to live with my mother and father. Mama was always a loving person and was happy to be there for her grandchildren. She and Papa began to rear Annie Mae and Bob with the same principles of hard work, family closeness, and spiritual uplifting that they had instilled in my siblings and me. Although I had lost my sister, our whole extended family had a close bond.

When we married, Cordell and I moved to Burke, Virginia, where he was born. The Pearson family had a lot of land because Cordell's father, Frank Pearson, and other family members had inherited much of the property. Pap, as Cordell's father was called, was the great-grandson of Francis Coffer IV, a prominent landowner of Burke, Virginia

in the mid-nineteenth century. When Francis Coffer IV died, he left a 374-acre tract of land to his slave, Phillis Pearson, and the four sons that they had together. One of those sons was Pap's grandfather. Although the Pearson family had land, they were generous in giving where they felt it was needed. The family donated land in 1874 so that a school could be built for blacks since there were no schools for blacks in that area. The school was called The Pearson Colored School. In 1876, they also donated land so that Little Zion Baptist Church and a colored cemetery could be built. That church and The Pearson Cemetery by the church still remained there in what became the Edgewater section of Burke. It was in that cemetery that Pap was buried. I began attending Little Zion Baptist Church and soon joined the choir.

Members of the Pearson family kept portions of the land until the 1950's, when a vast amount of the Pearson land was sold to Fairfax County because the county said that it needed the land to build Dulles Airport. Even though the county authorities condemned over 4500 acres of land, including what the Pearson family owned, and usurped the land for that airport, they did not end up placing Dulles Airport in that location. They eventually decided on another site for Dulles Airport.

Cordell and I lived in Burke for about twelve years. We were living there when our three children were born. My first daughter, Louise Etta, was born on July 21, 1929. Next my son, Ervan Cordell, was born on December 13, 1931. Then my baby daughter, Gladys Beatrice, was born on August 24, 1933. None of my children were born in hospitals. I had them right at home, and my mother delivered them all. They grew up being close to their extended family, which included Mama, Papa, my two brothers, Cordell's parents, his two brothers, three sisters, Annie Mae, and Bob. While we lived in Burke, Annie Mae, Louise, and Ervan were able to attend The Pearson School, which was a one-room school house that went from first to eighth grade with Mrs. Hines as its teacher. Mrs. Hines lived with us and looked out for my children. She not only taught them in class but also helped them learn new things at home. She had taught Louise so much that Louise was able to skip from the first grade into the third grade.

All of my children were good, and they usually did what we asked them to do. They never got into big fights. Sometimes they would get into an argument, or one child would try to play tricks on another, but I would let them settle it. One day, Gladys felt that her older brother and sister were getting all of the attention, so she tried to get them

into trouble. She took the red strip from the cigar carton seal and put it in her mouth, making it look like she was bleeding. Then she came into the room and said to me, "Look what Louise and Ervan did." I sent her back into the room to play with her brother and sister. Another time, Louise was using my iron, and Gladys couldn't wait to tell on her. She started, "Mama, Louise had your iron and she dropped it."

She would have gone on with a story about the incident, but I cut her off saying, "Okay, that's all to it." Gladys looked disappointed, like I had pulled the rug out from under her feet, and she stepped back.

None of my children ever got spankings because I did not believe in spanking children. Neither did Cordell. He was a gentle man who enjoyed children. He was a father they could play with. Neither of us did much disciplining, but we were lucky because our children never gave us any problems. We were a peaceful family and tried to keep peace in our house. In that way our children could have an environment where they would feel comfortable and contented.

Since Lenora and I ended up both being married to Pearson brothers, Lenora's children and my children were cousins, but they grew up like they were all sisters and brothers. All of their relatives were in

common because both of their sets of grandparents were in common. Louise and Annie Mae use to say that they were sister-cousins. When Gladys was born, Louise was four years old and went to stay with Mama and Papa for about a week. At that time Mama and Papa were living in a home in Georgetown and had Annie Mae and Bob with them. Annie Mae was about eight years older than Louise, and Louise would follow Annie Mae around just like I had followed my sister Lenora. Annie Mae wanted Louise to stay there forever and be her sister. She promised to give Louise her doll if she would stay, but that didn't happen. One day Annie Mae told Louise, "Grandma has a black bag that she won't let us touch. I think that it has babies in it because when she takes it to someone's house, they get a baby. So now you know where babies come from – Grandma's bag."

My parents continued to be hard workers. Mama took on the job working for U.S. Senator Robert Marion La Follette, who was a Republican Senator from Wisconsin. Mama became a housekeeper at his mansion in Alexandria, Virginia, and Papa became the caretaker for the house and grounds. This was a good job because Mama and Papa lived at the La Follette mansion and were able to bring Annie Mae and Bob there to live too. Even though Senator La Follette seldom stayed at this

house, he would occasionally come there, and sometimes he had big parties there. Papa kept the grounds so beautiful because he loved planting and taking care of flowers and trees. He watched over the animals on this farm. It was like a paradise there with a fishing pond in the back. Mama kept the house sparkling, and Senator La Follette liked the way his house looked whenever he came there. He told Mama that she could live at his house for the rest of her life. Mama and Papa made sure that Annie Mae and Bob did their share of work on this farm every day, and when my children came to stay, Papa put them to work, too. The senator even offered to send Annie Mae to school in Wisconsin, but Annie Mae did not want to leave her grandmother. My mother worked for Senator La Follette for a few years until she died and was laid to rest at the cemetery of Second Baptist Church of Falls Church, Virginia.

In 1935, I was living in Burke when my mother died. Papa continued to stay at Senator La Follette's farm in Alexandria and he continued to enjoy farming there. He even opened a small store up the road from the farm where Papa sold merchandise that he raised on the farm. When Mama died, Annie Mae was fourteen years old and Bob was twelve. They were already like siblings to my children, so Cordell and I decided to bring Annie Mae to live with

us to continue raising her. This we did. Bob remained with Papa on the farm until World War II when, even though he was only seventeen, he put his age up a year and joined the service.

Cordell decided to leave Burke when he got hurt on the railroad and could no longer work there. He had always been a hardworking, responsible man. He had a piece of land in Arlington, Virginia, and it was there that he built a very nice two-story three-bedroom house with his own hands. The home was at 2024 South Nelson Street. By 1940 he had finished this house for our family, and I was happy to move into a house designed and built by my husband. My children attended school in Arlington, and I worked as a domestic. .

The family remained close and looked out for one another. Annie Mae got married, and she and her husband, Robert Lee, found an apartment in Washington, DC. When Gladys was twelve years old, she went to DC to live with Annie Mae so that she could go to the DC Public Schools because we realized that it was an excellent school system. Gladys attended Turner Elementary School, Randall Junior High, and then Cardozo High School. She was also able to help Annie Mae with her children as she had them: Lenore, Elaine, Diane, and Robert. When

Bob came home from the war, he came to live with us in our Arlington home. He lived with us until he got married and moved to DC. When Papa got sick and was not able to work, Bob brought Papa to live with him.

In the early 1950's we moved from our house on South Nelson Street in Arlington, Virginia to Washington, DC. Annie Mae, who had been married for over ten years, and her husband, Robert Lee, moved their family into that lovely Arlington house that Cordell had built. Later when my daughter Gladys got married, she moved into the house. At first we bought a house on Gale Street. We were living there when some of our grandchildren were born. Then, because all of our children were grown, we decided to move into an apartment on 44th Street in Northeast Washington and later to one on F Street, Northeast. The nice thing about it was that some of my children and Bob lived in different apartments in the same building. It was always nice to have family nearby.

Soon after we moved to DC, I joined Mount Carmel Baptist Church on Third and I Streets, NW. I worked hard in my church, and I sang in two choirs. I remained active there and was still singing in the Women's Chorus when I was almost ninety years old.

Right after World War II, new houses had been built in an area of Northeast Washington called River Terrace. This neighborhood sat right on the Anacostia River and was quite picturesque with its garden-like setting. Cordell and I would go down by the river, and we fell in love with this area. At first only white families could buy the houses, but in the 1958 after housing in Washington opened up for blacks, we were able to buy our dream house. By this time, our children were married and having children of their own. We thought that River Terrace would be a nice place for our grandchildren to enjoy. The house that we bought in River Terrace was really not bigger than the house that Cordell had built, but it did have that new, clean, centralized gas heat and was near Benning Road and Minnesota Avenue, where a variety of stores was located. It was great to be in this section of Washington. Our River Terrace community was quiet yet vibrant. It was clean and family-centered. It was so nice that within ten years our daughter and son-in-law, Gladys and June Hines, bought a house around the corner and raised their family there. A short time afterward, our son, Ervan Pearson, and his wife bought a house three doors from our house, and they and their children moved there. Our daughter, Louise Hinnant, and her husband had already been living nearby; but when her husband

died, Louise sold her home, and she and her young daughter Sandra came to live with Cordell and me. Even years later after he sold his other house on Ingleside Terrance in DC, my nephew, Bob Pearson, bought a house in River Terrace and moved his family two blocks away. Then sixty years after I moved here, Annie Mae's son and my great nephew, Robert Lee, said to me, "Ever since I was a child and came to River Terrace to visit my family there, I have always dreamed of owning a house in River Terrace." So he bought a house up the street from Bob and fixed it up. Even though he already had another house and did not live in the one that he remodeled, he said that he just needed to have a part of River Terrace.

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

We were enjoying our birthday visit to Aunt Etta, but we didn't want her to get too tired because her grandchildren had already planned a house party for her. Aunt Etta was like a magnet that drew the family together, and as Robert, my mother, and I sat with her daughters and granddaughter Sandi in her bedroom reminiscing old times, Aunt Etta orchestrated the conversation. I understood the importance of

maintaining family ties and enjoyed watching the dynamics, though I felt a little sad that my mother-in-law, Annie Mae, was not with us. Over the years, Annie Mae had never forgotten Aunt Etta's birthday. She had always visited her aunt bearing presents. This was the first year that Annie Mae, due to her Alzheimer's, was not there, so we eagerly maintained that family tradition and relished being a part of Aunt Etta's family.

13 ASSEMBLE BLOCKS FOR THE NEXT STAGE

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

Time flies! I never realized how true that saying could be until I watched my children grow up before my very eyes. Within a few years I was helping Erika and then Brian prepare for that monumental step in their educational world called college. That meant supporting and encouraging them through SAT preparation, research of numerous colleges, applications, visitations, essays, scholarship requirements, interviews, and thoughts about a major. By putting aside a diversified assortment of treasury bills, bonds, and certificates of deposit, Robert and I had already financially begun our preparation for their colleges when they were still young children. We told each of them that the main tool that we would give them was an education, so we were committed to pay for their undergraduate years of college without having them get loans.

Getting our children ready for college and

paying for it were not as hard as actually letting them go. It was easier for me to let Erika go because she decided to attend Morgan State University, which was just an hour away. From the beginning, Erika usually came home every weekend, and she invited me to attend some activities at her college. Letting Brian go was much harder. Brian was offered partial scholarships at a few colleges and decided to attend Tuskegee University, a college in Alabama that was almost 800 miles away. After Robert and I drove our son down to the school and helped him get his things into his dorm, it was hard for me to leave. Robert had to practically drag me away as I held back my tears. I was leaving my son in an unfamiliar territory, far from home and family. After Robert and I drove away from the college, the flood gates opened and it was extremely hard to close them. Although I believed that, like a mama bird, I had to move aside and let my children fly, when I actually was in the position of doing so, it was one of the most difficult things that I had to accomplish.

Once Robert had mastered his building skills, he was able to utilize them in renovating various houses. We began buying houses for investment purposes. Some we kept as second homes, and others we flipped after they were remodeled. One house on Arabian Trail in Spotsylvania, Virginia, was a nice

three-bedroom and two-bath rambler that had a small den next to the kitchen. We hired a company to remove the small existing addition and build a shell for an addition which would almost double the size of the original house. Robert then researched and studied the codes for Virginia since this was his first venture in improving a house there. Working with inspectors and submitting plans and specifications that got approved before, during, and after each aspect of the interior tasks, Robert was able to finish the inside of the shell. With help from Brian and his friend Clint, Robert put in walls, doors, heating, and lighting, adhering to all of the structural and electrical codes.

During the five years that we had the house, it was utilized as a nice second home and a getaway house for our family and friends. Although we never really got to know our neighbors well, we would wave and speak to them as we walked in the community. Our family and friends were able to entertain there and enjoy the atmosphere but when vandals started to invade our property, we knew that it was time to go. The house was in a nice subdivision where plots were on three to ten acres of land. Our home, on four and a half acres, sat far off of the road. The vandalism began about four years after we bought the property. Many times the house was empty, and on two occasions, people came up the long driveway to our

carport and left beer cans there or in the yard. Then one day when we arrived there from our residence in Washington, we found that people had thrown eggs at the house. As we cleaned up the mess, we decided that it was time to sell. We felt a certain amount of discomfort because our property had been violated. To us, terrorism was felt on a small scale just as sharply as its weighty threats could be realized to the masses. We didn't know if those who did it were just teenagers having fun or if they were racist adults who wanted us to leave, since within the subdivision of over sixty homes, we saw only one other black family. To unknowing eyes, we may have even appeared as an interracial couple, which to some people would have been worse. Robert and I over the years had experienced the bias of people. Our first experience occurred soon after we got married and moved into an apartment in Mt. Rainier, Maryland. We habitually parked our car on Russell Avenue near our unit. One morning when we awakened to go to work, we found our car spray-painted with the words, "Nigger lover." Well, this egg-throwing act, which brought back memories of other ugly incidents, was not tolerable. Both Robert's family and my family came from Virginia, and we knew the history of some people and their biases. This sentiment was not one that we needed, so we were ready to leave. That house in

Virginia, which we bought in 1999 for $99,000 and kept as a second home to enjoy as our country getaway, we were able to sell five years later for $240,000.

From some ills I walked away, yet right into others I stumbled. During 2001 even while students, teachers, and staff were at school, workers painted, changed the carpets, and did asbestos removal at Shepherd. They put plastic over doorways and sealed off certain halls as they worked in an effort to keep us safe from the fumes. As I worked in my room each day, I developed a cough, which became persistent over time. I realized that I must have been allergic to whatever was in the air at the school, but I continued to work. Although I felt better during the summer break, when the children returned to school in August my cough returned also. Within a week or so I couldn't talk, but my students were wonderful. I would write instead of speak, and they worked with each other to help me teach. Each day that I came to work, the coughing got worse, and then I came down with a fever. Robert made a doctor's appointment for me through our George Washington Health Plan.

September 11, 2001, was one of the most devastating days in America, and I viewed a bit of its impact from a doctor's office in downtown

Washington. On the morning of September 11, I took the Metro train downtown to the Foggy Bottom station and walked over to George Washington Hospital. I arrived around 8:50 for my appointment and sat in the waiting room. Nurses and doctors seemed to be moving quickly in and out of the room, but they were not seeing the patients who were waiting there. The receptionist was viewing a small television set that was facing only her, but no one told us waiting patients any of the news of the outside world until the receptionist screamed, "We're under attack! They bombed the World Trade Center in New York, and now they are attacking Washington!" The news was scary, but I got up with the other patients there to watch the television screen set that had been by her desk. The news was replaying the first plane that had hit the World Trade Center's North Tower and then the second plane that hit the South Tower. Then, while we watched, the newsperson said that a plane had hit the Pentagon. I wasn't sure how long ago it had occurred, but it did seem like America was under attack. I thought that this must be the beginning of a war. During my lifetime, wars had been fought in other countries, but now we were being attacked right here. The newscast again showed the succession of airplanes hitting the towers and talked about the Pentagon, and although it was scary, I stood there

mesmerized as I looked at the TV. Then I started to pray. About 10:30 a nurse saw me and said that I would have to come back another day to see the doctor because the doctors and nursing staff were on stand-by alert in preparation for casualties from the morning's tragedy. I went to the first floor of the hospital, but as I walked out, people said that the subways had been shut down and buses were being stopped. I still had a fever and was shivering. I didn't know if the shivering was because of the fever or my nervousness with this confusingly horrible attack. I tried to call Robert at his school, but my cell phone connection wouldn't go through. The police were telling people to evacuate downtown because it was being closed off, so I had to get away from there. No cars could enter the area; they all had to leave. I found a phone booth and called my mother. I told her that I would begin walking uptown if I couldn't get a cab or bus and I would call her when I got home. As I walked past the subway station, the red line trains to Silver Spring had just started up again, and people were rushing to get on a train. I got on the first car and went home. It wasn't until the next day that I realized that one of those killed on the hijacked plane that ran into the Pentagon was a teacher with whom I had worked closely through the DC Geographic Alliance and the DC Geographic Bee, Hilda Taylor.

Hilda, an outstanding teacher, was traveling on a National Geographic trip with other teachers, students, and members of National Geographic on American Airlines Flight 77 that crashed.

When I was a child my parents shielded me from many of the evils in the outside world, but as an adult I viewed the world as it really was, and I learned to navigate my way within it. I loved being around people, but sometimes I had to get away from the noise and confusion in the world. When alone, I wrote for fun and relaxation, or spent hours engrossed in reading good books. I also relished doing puzzles and playing some games on the computer. Every day I tried to complete the three puzzles in The Washington Post: *Crossynergy Crossword, Sudoku, and the Scrabble Gram*. One computer game that I liked was Solitaire. When I was younger, Uncle Wes had taught me various versions of Solitaire with a deck of cards and certain tricks for winning those games. Once I discovered the computer versions of Free Cell and Spider Solitaire, I instantly found them fun and challenging. Computer games evolved quite a bit from the time that Robert and I had our first game system with three games, including "Ping," and the more realistic and perplexing they became, the more I liked them. The first game that actually got my attention was "Zelda." It was on Brian's Nintendo

Game System. One day I sat down with Brian and began playing that game and loved it because it had a story theme, a problem to solve, and skills that I could learn to develop. That day I noticed that computer games were more realistic and thus a little addictive. Over the years I had to set a limit on myself with computer games because I wanted to enjoy them without being completely hooked on them. It seemed that even when trying to get away from evils, I had to also guard against the ones inside of me.

Both Robert and I realized that we again needed to change our location. The house on 16th Street had been nice while the children were in school, and it was ideal for me since it was just three blocks away from my job. Brian and Robert enjoyed riding their bikes to Virginia through Rock Creek Park. I enjoyed walking to the Silver Spring subway station and to shops in Silver Spring. I also enjoyed daily walks in and near Rock Creek Park as Robert jogged throughout the community. I knew many people in that neighborhood, and our children had friends there. However, when the children grew up and our parents got older, we saw the limitations of that house. Sixteenth Street was busy, and there was no parking on either side of the street. There was a street directly across from the house with plenty of parking, but although there was a crosswalk right in front of our

house, many times cars did not stop for pedestrians, so it was dangerous to cross the street. The house stood high off Sixteenth Street with many steps that led to the front door. The back yard terraced up three flights of steps to reach the driveway, garage, and alley. Bringing in groceries or bigger purchased items was always challenging, and as time went on, some older family members and friends were no longer able to visit us because of the steps. The scariest thing was when Erika came to visit one day with her two young children. She was holding Kenechi in her arms and Emeka was beside her. When Robert looked out the front door, he saw them in the crosswalk halfway across the street. A car speeding down the street did not stop for them and almost hit Emeka. That scared Robert so much that he knew that it was time to go. We began looking for a very different type of location.

We had enjoyed the country style of living at our Virginia home, so we looked both in the suburbs and the exurbs for our next home. One day, while Brian, Robert, and I were visiting Erika after her new baby, Kamara, was born, Robert suggested that we go to see a house that he saw in *The Washington Post*. *The Washington Post* had been our main resource for buying and selling homes up to that point. We took Kenechi and Emeka with us as we drove to the house

in Brookeville, Maryland. This five-bedroom colonial with its four and one half baths was spacious and had ample porches, patios, and decks. Best of all, it had a two-car garage attached to the house. I thought, "If I had this house, I would be able to bring groceries right into the house from the car."

The agent saw us with Brian, Emeka and Kenechi and said, "This is a great family neighborhood. It would be ideal for your children. Besides, the house has a great central Maryland location in Montgomery County, close to Columbia, Washington, Baltimore, Gaithersburg, Fredrick, and Rockville."

As I walked through the house, I really liked all of the features that I saw, and for the second time in my life I told Robert, "I want that house."

Robert said, "We have some maneuvering to do, but we can try to go for it."

We had to get our house listed and sold, and we needed the seller of the Brookeville house to accept our offer contingent on the sale of our home. This we did. Of course, with our philosophy of minimizing debt, we put 80% down and got a conservative mortgage. That system worked for us and was part of our greater economic plan. In fact

when I looked back at our plan, I knew that even on our teaching salaries the reason we were able to amass a cushion to sustain us financially across the span of educating our children, to our own retirement, and even into helping our mothers was because of our investments, modest spending, and aggressive savings regimen. We had taken advantage of opportunities in mutual funds, stocks, and real estate. That was in 2005 before the stock market crashed and when everything in real estate was inflated, but with a few modifications we continued our plan which helped us maintain a fiscal anchor.

Traveling was still one of my hobbies, and when Erika and her husband, Uzo, asked if I wanted to go with them to Nigeria I immediately agreed. Robert did not want to go so I went on a two-week trip to Nigeria in December 2005 with my daughter, son-in-law, and their three children: six-year-old Emeka, two-year-old Kenechi, and Kamara, who was barely six months. Uzo was born in that country and his mother lived in Lagos; so we traveled to that city and stayed in Lagos Island before visiting other places, including a few days in Abuja, the capital. I truly enjoyed my trip to Nigeria and learned much about the history and customs of that country.

One custom in Nigeria that was very

noticeable was that disposable paper and plastic products were almost not seen. Bathrooms in commercial places and hotels used cloth towels instead of paper ones. People always ate on china plates. Even in "fast food" restaurants, we were served on china plates with silverware. A few days we ordered food from a restaurant, and the meal was delivered to our home with a personal server who brought a cloth tablecloth and napkins with the glasses, china, and silver to set up our dining room table. Since the people there did not overuse paper products, they made use of conservation in that way.

One of the best aspects of the Nigerian culture was the food. Everywhere that we went, food was plentiful and filling. Goat or chicken were common meats, and there was plenty of fruit. I loved eating jollof rice, egusi soup, foo foo, fried plantain, and puff puff. Obviously, the West African custom of cooking plenty and offering food to those who visited was carried over to America because my family had that same custom. I was glad that I had the opportunity to go to Nigeria.

Timing is important in all aspects of business, but in real estate it was crucial. My husband and I figured that the real estate bubble would be bursting soon, so we were trying to buy low and remodel to

sell quickly. Robert began flipping houses as fast as he could, and it was profitable. He had always wanted a house in River Terrace where his Aunt Etta lived, so he bought a two-bedroom row house that was on the corner. It had a porch off the side of the living room which Robert enclosed to make a family room. Three months later, we sold the house and bought another. The last house that we flipped was one in New Carrollton, Maryland. We bought for $105,000 and sold four months later for $240,000. After that we decided to get out of the real estate game because we knew that, like musical chairs, the music was bound to stop and we didn't want to be caught holding a house that wouldn't sell for the inflated prices. Right after we flipped that New Carrollton house, the real estate market crashed. It would have crashed sooner if it had not been for the stimulus measure that President Obama implemented, which had an incentive that helped first-time home buyers. That package was a selling feature that helped market this last house to a worthy buyer before the bottom fell through.

I felt that there were many factors that brought down the real estate market. People were losing jobs and businesses, so they were not able to make payments on the large, overpriced homes that they had bought. People started losing their homes, and banks

foreclosed on them and then took whatever they could get to sell the home. The house that we bought in Hyattsville was a foreclosed bank sale. Once houses on a block were sold at a lower price by the bank, they brought down the value of other homes on that block. Once the value of homes began to fall, people found that they owed more on their houses than what they were worth, and some began walking away from the houses, which caused greater decline. Everything in real estate began to spiral downward. In my life, I viewed real estate from many angles. I first thought of it as the basic foundation for stability. It was something to own, live in, and hold on to. Next, real estate became a business that later turned into a market game. For me, real estate then turned full circle back to being that basic home to have and hold. Somehow, with the grace of God, Robert and I fared well in real estate. Perhaps that was because we were lucky or because we were cautious. Perhaps it was because we did not become greedy as we pursued the business and gaming aspect of it. I understood that the real estate game was like gambling, and I was never a big gambler, so I helped to keep my husband's feet grounded. We saw many losses around us in real estate, but somehow the Lord guided us through.

In 2009 Robert and I took an exciting trip with members of Upward Trend for Families. Deborah and

Robert White and Vivian Frasier initiated this fun-filled trip to Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon at one of our club meetings, and seven of us decided to travel there. Robert and I flew to Las Vegas with Deborah, Robert, and Vivian. In Las Vegas, we met up with two other members of the club: Deborah's brother Bernard Harriston and his wife Mary. We stayed at the Luxor with its Egyptian theme. Even though the temperature outside was over 110 degrees each day, we played the slots a little, had great food, and enjoyed the water and live shows at the fabulous hotels. One day friends of the Whites who lived in Las Vegas picked us up and took us all around the city and its suburbs. My favorite part of the trip was our one-day excursion to the Grand Canyon, a natural wonder that had been carved out by water. We traveled by motorcoach via a guided tour. On the way we saw Lake Mead and The Hoover Dam as our tour guide and video explained a wealth of information about the area and each of the sites. Then we arrived at the West Rim of the Canyon. The steep, rocky terrain with paths through gentle woods that overlooked the natural indentations and ridges of that beautiful gully gave me a new sense of freedom and wonder. Being high up on a mountain cliff and looking deep down into The Grand Canyon that stretched farther than the eyes could see was simply awesome. That whole trip

with our wonderful friends and club members was lots of fun. Robert and I also figured that it might be our last trip together for a while since our new role of caregiving was becoming quite demanding.

14 ADJUSTING TO CHANGING TIMES

Genorah Broady Christian:

Our farmhouse in Clifford had a long wide front staircase that led to a wide upstairs hallway. The master bedroom and the main guest rooms were two of the four rooms that were entered from the main hallway. At one end of the hallway was the door to the upper balcony. At the other end of the hallway was the dark room. The dark room was where I kept many of my canned and pickled goods. I used the room as my dressing room, my thinking room, and my quiet room. When I stepped down two steps from my bedroom or the guest room, I would enter the two smaller bedrooms, and they led directly to the two larger bedrooms. Ed's room was one of the larger rooms in the back. Alma had the small room between Ed's room and my bedroom. Goldie had the room at the top of the back staircase. The back staircase led to a short hallway into the kitchen. This stately historic house had very large rooms, high ceilings, and three large porches around it. It had no central heating. There were fireplaces in the living room and one bedroom. Four of the other bedrooms had wood or

coal burning pot belly stoves. The dining room had an oil heater. The wood burning stove in the kitchen always kept the kitchen toasty warm.

Electricity had been added to this old farmhouse, but during storms, I unplugged everything. I was afraid that lightning would strike the house. I often saw the electricity from the lightning dancing across the wires of the house during a storm. Our house had no inside plumbing until around 1960. The well was near the back of the house. Ceramic pitchers for water and basins for washing sat on a washstand in each of the bedrooms. Big metal tubs of water for taking baths were filled by pitchers of water which were heated on the stove. During the day we used the outhouses behind the garden. At night, though, we used the "slop buckets" that were in each bedroom. All of my children had the responsibility of carrying their own slop buckets to the outhouse, emptying them, and cleaning them.

Tom and I, along with our children, continued to live in Amherst County without major worries until World War II. Our sons fought in the war in various branches. Some were eager and quick to join. Robbie joined the Navy. Ed and Duck went into the Army. Les, who was then in his thirties, was the last to be called. He went into the Army Air Corps. My boys

were very proud to fight for their country. In May 1945 while they were in the service, my mother, Ella Jones Broady, died at age 91. She had been living in Atlantic City with my sister Alma, so she was buried there. When Pap died, he was buried in Washington, but the cemetery where he was buried was later closed. A big new school called Fletcher Johnson was built on the land, and his remains were brought home to Virginia for reburial. I guess moving his body was all right because Pap and Ma were already in heaven together.

By the 1950's most of my children were raising their own children in other cities. My twins, Ed and Robbie, were my two youngest boys. After the war, Robbie moved to Washington and got a job in the government. He married Christine Hutchins and didn't return home to live. Only Ed had decided to live at home to help Tom and me run the farm. He was a big help with all the work that had to be done. Ed did not marry, so he had no children. In 1965, though, Ed died from pneumonia. I had a clock in my room that kept the time and the day, but the moment that Ed died that clock stopped, and no winding ever started it back up again. Losing Ed was really sad for me. I had been used to the death of other family members and friends, but it was an unbelievable

shock to lose my own son. After Ed died, one day I was standing alone at the stove in the kitchen baking bread. I bent over to pull the bread from the oven. Then I heard something behind me coming down the back stairs. I turned my head, and there standing in the doorway of the kitchen was Ed. I couldn't say a thing. I just stood there. He looked at me and smiled. Then he walked across the kitchen to the back door and disappeared. After that I was able to deal with Ed's death much better because I knew that part of him was still with me here in the house.

It was a comfort to know that our daughter Rose and her family were close by. Rose lived right here in Amherst County with her husband McKinley and their children. They went to St. Peter's Church, the same church where Tom and I were members. Tom was a Sunday school teacher and a deacon there. Other church members, relatives and friends were also close, and they would stop by. Tom's nephew Odell always came over to help Tom with the farm. His wife Edna, who was my cousin, often stopped over to check on me. Our neighbors, the Garlands, always kept in contact. Most of our children and their children lived away from Amherst County, but they called, wrote, and came to visit. They worked hard and filled our home with many of the conveniences of

their cities. They gave me a wringer washer, which allowed me to wash clothes much more easily. With this new washing machine, I just filled the machine with the clear rain water that I collected in my large tin tubs that sat in the yard. The machine swished the clothes around and washed them. A hose would let the soapy water drain out of the machine into another tub. Finally, after the clothes had been washed, I took them out of the water and put them one by one through the wringer at the top of the machine to squeeze the water out of them before I hung them on the line. This was very modern for me since I had been used to scrubbing clothes on a scrub board in my metal tub. So that I had the cleanest, brightest clothes, I continued to use bluing and the soap that I made from lard and lye, even though my children sent me soap powder to put into the new washing machine.

By the 1960's, my sons had put two indoor bathrooms in our farmhouse. One was on the first floor and one on the second. Even though I was used to the outhouses, my grandchildren were not accustomed to using them. Indoor bathrooms were nice. Around that same time, the children also modernized our kitchen. We got a sink and an electric stove, a refrigerator and a freezer. However, I still kept my wood burning stove to do a lot of my

cooking. My children also had two telephones installed in the house, one upstairs in our bedroom and one downstairs in the dining room. They gave us a television for the dining room and a lawn tractor for cutting the grass. I had bought myself an electric sewing machine to do my sewing, and I would sit up late at night using this fine machine. Modern life had become very convenient.

I always loved Amherst County and the family and friends that were around. Many people knew Tom and me, and we felt pretty safe around the folk there, black and white. People often stopped by to visit. Although I knew most people in the community, occasionally a stranger would come to the house, and we would make him or her feel welcome, but Tom and I always kept a shotgun behind the door just in case there was any trouble. Tom and I stayed active in our church. I was also active in a club in my community where we women met to knit, sew quilts, and share recipes or canned goods. Sometimes we even went on trips.

Well into our eighties we continued to work on our farm. Even with some conveniences, farming was constant work. With a farm there were no vacations, holidays, or retirement. Every day the cows needed to

be milked. The pigs still needed to be slopped. The chickens needed to be feed. With the plowing, gardening, canning, painting, mowing, trimming, cleaning, and many other jobs, the days were long and hard. Tom still got up before sunrise to begin his day. I still got up to fix a big breakfast and begin my chores. Our work never ended until sundown. Some used to say, "Work is a killer," but perhaps it was hard work that kept people alive longer. Anyway, Tom and I kept going and working as long as we could.

It was a cold day on December 17, 1972, when my husband Tom didn't wake up in the morning. At ninety-two years old, James Thomas Christian, my husband, died. We had been through many great years together and we always helped each other. I was determined to live alone in my home and to continue self-sufficiently to farm on my own. I mowed grass, painted, and did many jobs of the farm until I was eighty-eight years old.

One day when I was trimming the hedges I cut off my left thumb. Luckily, I had a telephone because I just picked up that thumb and went into the house to call for help. That was the first time that I had ever been in the hospital. The doctor couldn't save the thumb, but I learned to do my work just fine without

it. Then in 1979, I had a stroke and fell off a ladder while I was painting the ceiling of my dining room. After hospitalization, I got better, but I still struggled to talk and had to relearn how to walk. This was a low point for me because I felt so helpless. For the first time, I had to move from Amherst County when my daughter Edith took me to live with her in Washington. I soon learned to make Edith's home my home. With Edith and her husband Wes, their children, and grandchildren around to help me, it was nice. I also had many of my other children and grandchildren close by, so they visited me often. I guess I could never go back, but it would be nice if others would.

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***Anita Lynn Christian Lee*:**

Grandma was drifting off to sleep as she finished her story. This strong woman, Genorah Broady Christian, who was born in 1891, had lived to see America change and then change again. She had survived all of her sisters and brothers, three of her sons, and her husband. She had not only raised her own nine children, she had also planted strong seeds for support of family and ownership of land which

touched the lives of her 16 grandchildren and numerous great- and great-great grandchildren. Although she lived most of her life in Amherst County, Virginia, she spent the last few years in Washington, DC, at the loving home of her daughter and son-in-law, Edith and Wes Bevan. It was there that she continued to tell her story to all of her family who listened. Then on February 11, 1985, at the age of ninety-three, Genorah died in Washington, DC.

How Could I Leave?

How could I leave?

This country air and red old clay,

The high blue mountains near and far,

The dew of the summer's morn on greenness everywhere,

The fields, the gardens, the woods,

And all of my animals are here.

How could I leave this land?

I get up each morning to work.

The acres of garden need weeding.

There are tomatoes to pickle and can.

There are pole beans to plant.

The chickens need heat so they won't freeze.

I just need to wire a fence at the henhouse.

There's a mess of potatoes still in the cellar from last fall,

But I have to dig up the new sweet potatoes.

The hedges need clipping.

I'd better finish painting the dining room.

This is what I understand.

Tom will be back from slopping the hogs and milking the cows.

I have to split some wood for the stove

And get the breakfast on.

As Tom rounds the corn field with buckets of milk in the wagon

I will get the churn ready.

The children will be down tomorrow.

I better pick some berries for a pie.

They'll want a few apple turnovers too.

Work is all I know, work and the land!

How could I leave?

When you don't have your own land to work, what do you have?

15 A STRETCH INTO CAREGIVING

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

I always believed that I had a purpose in life as I set out to fulfill my missions. Each mission, I felt, was something that I was called to do. I believed that God guided me to understand that mission, but I had to act upon it. I knew from an early age that I was called to teach and I eagerly embraced that mission. I enjoyed teaching so much that I sometimes felt guilty taking a salary for it. I also felt that I was called to marry Robert and to be a mother, so with joy I tried to fill our marriage and family life with love and support. I felt that I was called to volunteer both in my church community and in my city, so I gave of my time and talents to help wherever needed. During the past five years, it seemed like I was given a new mission. After my mother-in-law was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and it began to progress, and after my mother became less mobile, I knew that I was called to be a senior caregiver for my parents.

My mother-in-law, Annie Mae Lee, was a classy, well-dressed grandmother and great-grandmother who had retired from Columbia Hospital for Women as a nursing assistant and began taking care of two of her great-grandchildren. She always looked stunning. Her large bedroom closet was filled with over 50 hats, 75 pairs of shoes, and rows and rows of dresses, suits, blouses, and slacks. Wherever she went, she wore fancy outfits that matched or coordinated from head to toe. Wearing her lovely hats, Annie Mae always had the appearance of a true southern belle. When she began putting clothes in the refrigerator and food in the drawers, my husband and his sisters knew that something was wrong. Then other signs began occurring, like not remembering how to use her microwave, repeatedly losing her keys, and locking herself out on numerous occasions. She was constantly in need of assistance. In addition, almost twice every week she would ask to be taken to see a doctor because she said that she was not feeling well. The doctors ran tests on her and said that physically she was fine but that she was in the initial stage of Alzheimer's disease. Annie Mae lived in Fairfax County, Virginia which was at least one hour away from our home in Brookeville, Maryland. During rush hour when the traffic was heavy, it was

almost impossible to get to her in less than two hours. Robert, his sisters, and I agreed that she really should no longer be living alone. Since Robert had recently retired and his sisters were still working, Robert and I arranged to bring her to our house, where she would have her own bedroom and be surrounded by nature. My sisters-in-law agreed to take her three weekends each month.

In September 2005, Annie Mae moved in with us. Caring for her had its joys and its hurdles. Annie Mae loved nature and enjoyed sitting on the back porch watching the trees and the deer and listening to the various birds, especially the geese and chickadees. She enjoyed walking in our community, and Robert enjoyed walking with her because it gave them a special bonding time. One thing Annie Mae loved to do more than anything else was to sing. She loved the religious songs that she had grown up singing and she knew all of the words. Her voice was beautifully melodic in a high soprano range. I would pull out the Catholic and Baptist hymnals that I had at home and play the music on the piano as Annie Mae sang her songs. We would laugh and kid if I began playing a song that she didn't know or she began singing one that I didn't know. We enjoyed great communication through music. She also enjoyed going to the

Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center in Silver Spring, Maryland, and it was a great support for us. Soon after Annie Mae moved in with us, Robert began taking her to this center three days a week from 10:00 until 3:30. The staff there helped her get involved in some of the activities like art, Bingo, and watching movies. She especially loved to attend the Friday dances even though she did not dance herself. She also liked the lunches that they served. One year, she even participated in a fashion show wearing her elegant yellowish gold suit with a black and gold hat. Annie Mae met many friends at that center, and the socialization and activities, I believed, helped to slow down her progression of Alzheimer's disease.

Some of the difficulties of Alzheimer's disease were classic. Annie Mae said that we were trying to take her things, so she tried holding onto some objects, like her pocketbook. She stuffed her pocketbook with lots of tissue paper, and she had to take it with her to every room she went. Annie Mae would take and move objects so often that sometimes we could not find things. Once when we took her to my daughter's house, she came home with the remote control to my daughter's television in her pocketbook. Every day I had to look for something that she had misplaced, like her brush, her eyeglasses, her false

teeth, or even her pocketbook. Sometimes I'd find them in the oddest places. Annie Mae loved to wear big beautiful hats every day, but many days one of her hats would not be in the closet and she'd accuse me of stealing it from her, so I'd search until I would find it in her bathroom cabinet or behind a piece of furniture. Sometimes when I was cleaning, I'd find food wrapped in a napkin in the back of her drawer. Furthermore, my mother-in-law refused to take the medicine that her doctor prescribed for slowing down the progression of Alzheimer's, and even when Robert and I tried crushing it up in her food or drink, she would notice some tiny pieces and refuse to eat or drink anything. She said that we were trying to poison her, so after consulting with her doctor, we quit trying to give her the medicine. Each night she went through her closet and pulled out all of her clothes. She tried on clothes and put them on over top of other clothes. In the morning I had to put her clothes back on hangers and put them in the closet again. Eventually, I began removing more and more items out of her closet and storing them in a guest room closet, until it got to the point that I kept only the clothes that I wanted her to wear for the next day in her closet. Over the next few years it became harder and harder to bathe her in the shower. Anna Mae did

not like taking baths, and she would give me great resistance about getting into the shower.

Annie Mae lived with us for three years as her Alzheimer's progressed, and although caring for her had its ups and downs, I enjoyed having her with us. I told her that she was my partner, and she was quite ready to go with me. She went many places with me such as to church, to the grocery store, to the mall, or to visit my mother. Robert also loved having his mother with us and planned for all of her needs. He fixed meals, sat with her on the back porch, and took her to visit family. It was, though, quite hard for Robert as he watched his mother decline mentally. His mother had been his main support and best friend as he was growing up. He had always been quite close to her, but he felt that he was losing her inside that shell of her body. He began seeking support from friends in our Upward Trend for Families Club who worked in nursing facilities or as social workers for the elderly. He also began researching nursing homes but found that it was almost impossible to get into a nice one because the waiting lists were so long. Robert filled out applications and placed his mother's name on a few of those waiting lists where, because of his research and visits, he felt she would receive the best of care. Eventually, an opening came. On

December 28, 2008 as her Alzheimer's began getting worse, Anne Mae moved into Carroll Manor Nursing Home. It was one of the hardest things emotionally that Robert had to do for his mother; but the caring staff there, along with my support, helped him and Annie Mae through that transition.

My mother had long been an independent, active woman. I was caught off-guard when she had her first mini-stroke in her late eighties. The doctor was more concerned than she was. Mom recovered quickly, and this incident did not slow her down. Even as she turned ninety, she was still driving and quite involved in numerous organizations at St. Francis de Sales. Then in 2005 when she was 91 years old, she fell and broke her hip. She underwent surgery for a hip replacement and intensive rehabilitation and therapy because she was determined to walk again without assistance. About six months after her surgery, she also had a cataract removed from her eye and looked forward to being active again. At that time mom was still living at her home alone, and I would go there almost every day to assist her. I fixed her dinner, did her laundry, organized and paid her bills, helped her in and out of the bathtub, drove her to stores and put away her groceries. I took her to church and to visit friends. Robert and I often

brought her to stay with us in Brookeville for a few days, where she enjoyed sitting on the porch and talking to Annie Mae, but she also looked forward to going back home. She let it be known that she lived in her own house in DC. My mom remained in her own home for the next few years until she had another mini-stroke and fell again. Her mobility was not strong because she felt very uncertain and unsteady on her feet. She was in constant fear of falling. It was at that time that Robert and I agreed that we needed to move my mom in with us. Two months after my mother-in-law moved into Carroll Manor, my mother came to live with us. Since my mother's mind was very sharp and she was still rather independent, we allowed her to do many things for herself. As her mobility began to deteriorate further, Robert and I were there to give her full support.

In February 2009 Mom officially moved in with Robert and me. We were both retired and quite experienced at being caregivers. During the next few years with my mother in our home, we were able to give her assistance, and she was a big help for me also. As I wrote books, she was the person who read through each stage of my manuscripts and, like an old-school teacher, edited and gave input all along the way. My mother had always been one of my best

friends. She was a person to whom I could tell my inner thoughts and she would give me her opinion. So it was kind of exciting having my mother and friend move in. My mother enjoyed being with me and going everywhere that I went. Since I often drove to church, the stores, or to visit someone, she was eager to go. She attended club meetings with Robert and me regularly. I greatly enjoyed doing things with my mother, but it could also get demanding. I felt like I had no space or free time of my own. I really could not go any place or do anything without her. She didn't want me to leave her at the house alone because she felt that she did not know anyone around there. Robert sometimes stayed with Mama when I needed to go places, but when I came home, she seemed agitated that I had left her and seemed to go backwards in her mobility steadiness. A few times when Robert and I went out, we left our phone numbers and all emergency information right by her and set the phone next to her. This made her feel a little better, but we knew that we could leave her only for a couple of hours at the most.

My mother, unlike my mother-in-law, refused to go to a senior recreation center during the day because she said that she did not want to be around old people. I took her to the Margaret Scweinhaut

Center, which was full of younger, active people over 55, and she did participate in a writing class and some of the exercise programs; but she only wanted to go if I attended also. When I had something else to do and wanted to take her there for the day, she refused to go. I tried to keep her socially active. Outside of her involvement with my activities and friends, I tried to keep her connected to her associates. Being away from DC cut her off a little from her longtime friends, neighbors, and church members, so a few times a week I helped her to call or email at least one old friend, neighbor, or relative. Occasionally I took her to visit those whom she hadn't seen for a while. Once a year for mom's birthday, my brother Bill and his wife Gail, along with Robert and me, organized a cookout at our home, and we invited her family and old friends. Each year she said, "No more parties," but when they happened, she was in her glory because in essence she had always been a party girl.

One day, out of the blue, mom seemed to accept her new residence with Robert and me as home. When she rode with us back to her old house in DC to pick up the mail, she was anxious and asked, "When are we going home?" Over the next few years, my mother's strength gradually deteriorated a bit, but she still maintained determination and

resilience. The arthritis in her legs, arms, and hands became more painful. Her feet and legs began to swell, and she could walk only with the assistance of her walker for short distances of less than 100 feet before she needed to sit down. Sometimes she used the wheelchair when she was going places with longer distances, and she readily drove the motorized carts in stores when they were available. Still, she tried to exercise using some of the routine that she started in physical therapy. At age 98 she was still able to come downstairs each morning and climb those steps each evening when she was ready to retreat to her bed in her own room.

Even though mom was living with us and using a walker, she continued to have some dizzy spells and falls. She occasionally would get weak, and she could not follow along in a conversation, but then she would bounce back and become strong and sharp in her thinking. These episodes greatly upset me, and I felt guilty thinking that there must have been something that I could have done to prevent them. Her doctors monitored her medications and sent her to labs for testing but said that she should continue doing as she had been doing. In fact, they all agreed that she was actually faring quite well for her age.

My mother loved the Lord and felt blessed every time she was able to receive Jesus in communion. Into her nineties, she continued being a Eucharistic Minister and administered communion at Mass, as well as to "shut-ins" who could not get to Mass. Her love for the Eucharist was so ardent that even pain or catastrophes would not keep her from this precious gift. One day when she and I were visiting a church in Gaithersburg, I drove her to the front entrance and helped her out of the car. She started up the walkway to the door of the church using her walker while I went to park the car. By the time I got to the church door she had fallen and was sitting on a bench outside the church with a priest and some parishioners. The priest suggested that she should go to the hospital, but mom insisted that she wanted to go to Mass and receive communion. She was in great pain and could barely walk with people holding her on both sides, but she attended Mass that day. After church I drove her to the emergency room. She had five broken ribs, and her oxygen level was very low, but she was satisfied because she had received The Eucharist.

Being a caregiver called for much love, patience, and sacrifice. It was not easy and it was a full-time commitment. Not everyone would take on

that role, and some people in a family might think that they could not devote that kind of time and energy to care for someone because they had other things that they had to do. Caregiving could be a strain financially, physically, and emotionally, but it had many rewards. The biggest reward was being there to give back to a parent who had provided so much. Robert and I understood this when we decided to be caregivers for our mothers. I had great appreciation for other family members who also took on that role of being the caregiver for their parents well before Robert and I decided to do so. Years ago, my great Aunt Mary stayed with her father, my Great-Grandpa Nick, and cared for him in his house with no running water or electricity. She waited on him hand and foot for many years. Then Aunt Mary's daughter, my cousin Esther, and her husband Massie, took in Aunt Mary and made her life comfortable until Aunt Mary's death. My cousin Evelyn, after her father died, brought her mother, Aunt Rose, to live with her and cared for her for years even as she declined with cancer. My Aunt Edith and Uncle Wes brought Grandma, Edith's mother, to DC after she had a stroke. They took care of Grandma with warmth and attention. Later after Uncle Wes died, Edith's daughter Pam and her husband Cecil brought Aunt

Edith, who had crippling arthritis, to live with them and took care of all of her needs. They traveled to various places and took her everywhere they went. For many years, Robert's cousin Louise took care of her aged mother, Aunt Etta, until Aunt Etta was 105. Then Louise's sister Gladys took their mother to her home to care for her. Even as Gladys ailed, she was still caring for her mother when Aunt Etta was 108 years old. These caregivers in my family were strong, committed people who were willing to sacrifice some of their own time and pleasures to ensure that their parents were safe and well cared for. I, like these other caregivers, understood the importance of this family commitment.

Listen to Their Story

Beyond the shadow of a doubt,

There is a place within the heart that understands.

Uncertainty cannot wash it away;

Nor can time or distance.

Truth is inbred into the veins of life.

Within each generation there are stories—

Stories that paint the pictures of life;

Stories that flow from the mouth of each artist

And wait to be captured and enjoyed

By those who make those words a part of their understanding,

A part of their lives.

Listen to the story from each generation.

Listen and understand.

16 BINDING UP THE LATER YEARS

Etta Coleman Pearson:

After we had been married for almost 50 years my husband Cordell died on November 11, 1976. Since I looked at things positively, I was never really low. Although I lost my partner, I was still surrounded by my family. We were a breed who always stuck together. I was blessed to have my children, my nephews, my nieces, my grandchildren, and my cousins near me or just a phone call away. I had the love of God and support of my relatives, so throughout my life I was happy.

I was glad when they built an elementary school right across the street from my house. Many of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren were able to go there. It was nice being able to look out my window and keep watch over the little ones. Even when those from my family no longer attended the school, I was able to enjoy sitting and looking out the window at all of the other students going to and from

school. I liked watching them run and play. My children grew up quickly, and their children also grew, but young people were always dear to me. I used to work as a teacher's aide in a school, and when I came home I also helped to care for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Once my first grandchildren were born, they began calling me Mimi, and that name stuck for the next two generations of children. I had so many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren that sometimes when they gathered, every inch of the house and the yard would be filled. I thought each one of them was special and I loved them all. After my retirement I was able to be there for them whenever they needed me. Right at home I became their caregiver, their counselor, their teacher, their nurse, their friend, and their Mimi.

How I loved pictures of the family! I avidly collected photographs that I placed in photo albums. Since people knew that I treasured pictures, sometimes they would send me snapshots from different occasions, and I would neatly add them to my collection. I had pictures of all of my extended family and friends and enjoyed sharing my albums when people came to visit.

My younger brother Spencer died on February 24, 1999. He was 87 years old. We had been close and did many things together. He loved to play the piano just as I did, and he played as others sang at my 90th birthday party. My brother, Reverend Dr. Spencer Coleman, was pastor emeritus of St. Paul Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia. He and his wife Virgie had bought a house in Washington, DC many years earlier, and they lived not far from me.

After my daughter Louise lost her husband she came to live with me. We lived together for many years while her daughter Sandra (whom we called Sandi) and Sandi's children were growing up, and I was their support. When I was still young, in my seventies and eighties, I was able to be of great assistance to those children, but by the time I reached my late nineties I realized that Louise was greatly assisting me, and I was very thankful to have her living with me. I knew that it took great sacrifice on her part because Louise helped to care for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren at the same time as she cared for me. Fortunately, the Lord provided me with good health because I had never been in a hospital my entire life, and I never even really got sick. My strength was also good, and I was still walking and could go up and down the stairs of

my home even at the age of 100. I was quite grateful, though, that my nephew Bob surprised me by installing a stair-lift in my house because I felt like a queen riding it up the stairs.

My family gave me a 100th birthday party that was spectacular. It was a dinner party at the Officers' Club of Bowling Air Force Base in DC. The food, songs, prayers, and tributes from family and friends, who traveled from the Washington area and across the USA to be there, were overwhelming. I was quite pleased and thankful.

My strength gradually began to wane and I began to have a few dizzy spells, so I started going downstairs less and less. My grandchildren and great-grandchildren were around to help quite often. My pastor and members of my church visited me once a week. They read the Bible with me and brought me communion. My great-nephew Robert came to visit on Thursdays. I was always dressed and ready on those special days awaiting my guests in the living room downstairs. Since my house did not have a bathroom on the first floor, it was much easier for me to stay upstairs most of the other days.

By the time I was 104, I no longer went downstairs. I received Meals on Wheels service, and

Louise and my grandchildren or great-grandchildren brought other food up to me. At that point I had more and more dizzy spells and periods when I felt so weak I didn't want to eat. My doctor made house calls to me. After checking my blood pressure and blood sugar, he said that I needed no medication, just rest. He said I was still rather healthy for my age. Since my doctor and my pastor came to my house, I never had to go outside for anything. I enjoyed sitting in my room watching TV and looking out my window. I stayed inside until one day that year my family decided to move me to my daughter Gladys's house, and she became my principal caregiver. Gladys's house was right around the corner from my house and had the same floor plan, so when I moved there I felt quite at home.

Throughout my life, I was able to help many people. At one time or another, my children, some of my grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great grandchildren, a niece, nephew, and a cousin lived with me, and I was able to help them. I also helped people in the community and around the world. Whenever anyone needed anything I was willing to give. I gave to charity, to the poor, and to my country. One of my favorite charities was Habitat for Humanity. When President Carter created a project

where he built homes for people who needed them, I thought that this was an excellent thing for a former President to do; so I started sending money to him for that cause and I kept giving because so many people needed homes. In January 2010 when a 7.0 earthquake hit Haiti and caused such great damage, death, and destruction, I immediately sent money to the relief effort and reminded Robert, my great-nephew, about his great-grandfather being from Haiti and the people there needing help. I always believed that God would bless those who helped others, and I was blessed.

So many things happened in my lifetime. I didn't travel very far but I did meet many people. My granddaughter Deborah (whom we call Debbie) worked for the State Department, and she brought people to meet me. I received birthday greetings from Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, President Clinton and President Bush. Two mayors of Washington, Marion Barry and Anthony Williams, came to visit me. The Prince George's County executive, Rushern L. Baker III, as well as Maryland senators and representatives came to visit me for my 108th birthday. My children put their pictures and cards on the wall for display. I never really thought that I would see a black man in the White House as the President of the

United States, but I even lived to see that happen.

In March 2011 when it became increasingly harder for my daughter Gladys to run up and down the steps caring for me, Gladys and I moved into a beautiful two-bedroom apartment on the first floor of a Senior Living Community in District Heights, Maryland that Gladys's daughter Debbie had arranged for us. I became an immediate celebrity since I was the oldest resident there. My age was impressive to those who knew me. When doctors and nurses came to the apartment to care for me, they asked to have their pictures taken with me. On October 18, 2011, when I turned 107 years old, I was showered with flowers and balloons from the staff where I lived. On November 6, 2011, when my church, Mount Carmel Baptist Church, celebrated its 135th anniversary (1876-2011) I was featured in the program as their oldest member.

Although I felt fine at 107 and had a clean bill of health from my doctors, I was basically confined to my special hospice bed with its electronic alternating pressure air mattress system to keep me comfortable. Sometimes, though, my active mind still wanted my relaxed body to get up and do things. One day I almost accomplished a feat that I had diligently

planned. While Gladys was out getting vegetables from the Farmers' Market truck that came by, the fire alarm in the building began ringing. I pulled myself up and tried to get out of my bed, but I was only able to get my feet half out because the bed was so high that they were dangling across the side of the bed. Then, I took my pillow and dropped it on the floor, but my legs were too short to reach the bottom. By that time the alarm had stopped, but I already had a plan and I was on my way to completing it; so I took another pillow and dropped it on top of the first pillow, but there was still a gap between my feet and the pillows. Even though I couldn't feel the bottom, I stretched my toes and was ready to make my solo independent move out of my bed and over to my soft cushioned armchair. Before I did, Gladys walked into the apartment and when she saw me hanging off the side of the bed, she looked frightened. She wanted to know what I was doing. "Didn't you know that I could get up by myself? I just wanted to surprise you," I remarked.

Throughout her adult life, Aunt Etta remained the support beam that fortified her extended family. This support kept the family bound together and strong physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As her cousin Elwood, also called Woody, said, "What a spectacular woman she is! Her life has been a blessing for our whole family." Her niece Lenora said, "Ever since I was a child, Aunt Etta was someone I felt close to because she was always so loving and caring. This gave me comfort."

After Aunt Etta moved into the senior center, Robert's visits became less frequent, but he would call her every Thursday, and she looked forward to those calls as her ray of sunshine. A few times when he missed a call, she would call him to see what was wrong. On Saturday, December 3, 2011, Robert and I visited Aunt Etta at St. Paul's. When we walked into her apartment we began talking to her daughters, Gladys and Louise, in the living room; but Aunt Etta, whose hearing was quite alert, recognized our voices and called for us to come into her bedroom where she was resting. Aunt Etta was all dressed up and looking as beautiful as a bouquet of roses. Her skin was

flawless and her eyes were keen as she sat propped up on the two pillows in her bed. It was clear that though she was not as mobile, Aunt Etta, that feisty matriarch, still had a mind as sharp as a tack. As Robert and I talked with Aunt Etta and her daughters, the jokes and laughter entwined our discussions of recent events and family history. I thought that certainly the determination and strong will of our older family members must have remained a driving force that propelled their long lives. Before we left, she bade her decree: "Don't forget where you came from. Family should always stick together. That's the way it should be."

Aunt Etta lived a long life as the matriarch of a huge family. Even at 108 years old, her mind was still alert, and as her granddaughter Sandy took her down to South Carolina where Sandy lived and could care for her grandmother, Aunt Etta asked her, "What am I doing down here?" It was at Sandy's house on August 24, 2013, that Aunt Etta peacefully returned home to The Lord.

We are Family

Working, playing

Singing, praying

Always with unending love

We are family.

Sharing clothes from day to day

Listening to what our uncles say

Keeping track of our every move

We are family.

When we want to move ahead

Family's blessings are then said

And support lest we fall

We are family.

From the darkness of the night

To the brightness of the light

We are there for each other

We are family.

When we have no place to go

And our spirits are down low

Home is always waiting though

We are family.

Never there to chide or blame

Never made to feel ashamed

Overlooking all of our faults

We are family.

Celebrations, tribulations

Births, deaths, and wedding invitations

We have a lifetime of memories

We are family.

17 TRIBUTE TO A FAMILY QUILT

Anita Lynn Christian Lee:

As humans, we recorded, studied and analyzed the people and incidents that had an impact on us. History was not an exact science, but it was revealed in different ways and from various viewpoints. Every person and group told their story from their own eyes. Historical individuals and events with monumental significance were important in my world but I was able to appreciate their worth so much better as I viewed them in perspective of my own past. My extended family had been a bridge to the outside world, and sometimes they gave me a different angle with which to look at the landscape.

When Pope Benedict XVI came to America in 2008, Bill sent me a few tickets for viewing spots on the Catholic University campus. Bill was married to

Gail Samuel and living in California with their two children, Samuel and Orlando, so he was not able to use the tickets that Catholic University had afforded its alumni. Brian and his girlfriend Aidia accompanied me to Catholic University. It was a nice spring day. We took the subway there because we were told that parking would be restricted. We got there a couple of hours earlier than the time that the Pope was due to come. Vendors were selling water, food, and other items. Security was much more visible than it had been 30 years earlier when I was on that campus to see another Pope. We waited in a long line to go through the metal detectors and to have a guard search through our bags and pocketbooks. The whole vicinity around The Shrine and the university's campus was sectioned off with fencing, and each person's ticket determined in which section that person would be able to stand. We were directed to a nice area across from the side entrance of The Shrine. We went right up to the fence, but the fence was far away from the steps where the Pope would be. Still we watched. The people around us were all very friendly. Various songs, chants, and cheers broke out. As people from one section shouted a cheer, those in another section would echo it. The atmosphere was festive. Eventually, various cars pulled up along the

driveway between us and the steps. It was a sea of red as cardinals from all over America stepped out and walked up the steps. Then the Popemobile brought the Pope for his entrance, and he got out and walked up the steps. Brian and Aidia actually viewed the Mass and heard him speak on their cell phones. I thought about how nice it was being there to see the Pope with my son, just like it had been years ago with my brother. This was definitely a blessed day.

Excitement rained all around Washington when Barack Obama became President. Even though I voted for him, I was afraid for President Obama because I thought that there were those in America who would hate him because of his color and they would try to assassinate him, his wife, or his children before, during, or soon after the inauguration. It thrilled me to be proven wrong. Bill and Gail came to DC to go down to the National Mall for the Inauguration on that bitter, cold day. I was caring for my grandchildren and my mother, so I didn't attend. We watched everything on TV in our family room in Brookeville. It was a glorious day for America because so many people had come together, including young and old, male and female, blacks, whites, and Latinos, to be a part of insuring that Barrack Obama, the first black man, would become President of the

United States of America. This date of January 20, 2009, was one that would go down in history.

How did these people and events in my life help me? Even at my young age of 60, I could look back over my life to see the many blessings that I received. I thought that I got an excellent education and I really loved my schools. Unfortunately, all of my schools went out of existence. Both my college and grad school became part of The University of the District of Columbia. Notre Dame Academy closed down in 1989, and since it was adjacent to Gonzaga High School for boys, Gonzaga took over the building and expanded its school. Finally, my first school, St. Francis de Sales, was the last to close in 2007. It was this school within my first parish that helped to mold my moral and spiritual foundation. Even the school song inspired me. There were times when I still found myself singing the words to my elementary school song, "Hail to St. Francis de Sales," and wondered if anyone else remembered them.

I was pleased that my children grew up and successfully took on their own responsibilities in life. Erika married and had three wonderful, smart, and creative children—Kamara, Kenechi, and Kamara—so Robert and I were able to revel in grandparenthood.

Although she majored in elementary education, she taught only one year, but she later retooled in Information Technology and liked it. She also started her own business, which energized her. Brian enjoyed his profession as a chemical engineer for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and bought a house not far from the area where I grew up. At age 35 he was still unmarried and had no children, but he volunteered his time helping teenage boys through a non-profit organization that he and his friends founded. His main hobby always was playing sports, and he kept this hobby through his adulthood. He enjoyed skiing, as well as playing football, basketball, golf, soccer, and tennis. He also liked coaching football. After retiring from the DC Public Schools, Robert and I were active in taking care of our mothers. We continued our activities in Upward Trend for Families with all of our truly genuine friends. Robert enjoyed building and investing in real estate, and I would vouch that my husband became an expert in repairing and beautifying almost everything on a house from the outside to its interior. I had more time to attend meetings of organizations in which I belonged, like The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia, where I always learned new things about my native city. I also enjoyed writing, a

little gardening, church ministries, and fun activities with the grandchildren.

Always the eternal optimist, I felt that no matter how hard things seemed, we could strive to make them better. I therefore worked hard to mediate and rectify any problems that occurred either at home or in any of my outside circles. I did have a small regret. I might be the last of my family who really appreciated the family heirlooms. My mom had tried to preserve jewelry, china, silver, knickknacks, and furniture that were given to her by her sister, her mother, and her grandparents. Over the years while I was growing up she told me the history of each of those items, and I had an appreciation of their importance. Either I had not done a good job in relating this history and significance to others in my family or the age of rapid change had them hypnotized by newer products that they liked, but they saw no need or desire to keep any of the family heirlooms. In fact my children said that they were "old," or worse, "clutter." The discussion about the worth of something old versus new seemed to be ongoing, but perhaps that in itself was good. Since my mother gifted to my brother and me shares of her house, and in 2011, Bill sold his share to Robert and me; we were prepared to maintain it as the family

home. We began remodeling that house. With a long distance call to my brother and a meeting with my mother and my children, we came to consensus as to which pieces of furniture needed replacing and which we should preserve. Brian and Aidia were big assets in this venture of painting, updating or restoring furniture, and redecorating. They completely took over one room and updated it with new paint, sofas, curtains, and accessories. As Robert and I added a bathroom to the second floor, Brian helped me pick out the cabinets, toilet, tub, ceramic tile, and all of the other furnishings for that bathroom. Even the grandchildren assisted in the remodeling. They helped to pick out bathroom items and moved furniture from the second floor. When my mother saw the house after it had been renovated, she was quite pleased. She kept saying, "This house is gorgeous! I can't believe it. What a treasure!" In this way, perhaps the new things became new heirlooms that would have significance for the younger generations.

Even though the world around me changed over the years, I still maintained peace within my own little world. In my outside world, standards of expectation gradually changed as the value of money decreased. Everyone seemed to get less service for

higher costs. When I got my first car in the late sixties, I could go to the gas station and the attendant would fill up the tank on less than $5.00, and he would also wash the windows and check under the hood to see if I had enough oil and water. In 2012 it took about $50.00 for me to fill my own tank with no other service. I gradually became accustomed to paying more for groceries, even with self-serve checkouts where I ran the food over the scanner and put the items in the bags that I bought or brought into the store. In that outside world there grew fear, anger, fighting, and killing among people. Within my own world, I found guidance from God and paid homage to Him. I respected family and friends, and I tried to help others who were in need.

Although I might have been born with my own unique traits, I learned a lot from my family. My knowledge and practices helped me to succeed. I knew that helping family members with their needs and not their wants was beneficial to the whole family's growth. I knew that saving and investing more while spending less was the best way for me to maintain financial stability. I had always been conservative and thrifty about spending, ever since I received my first pay check from Schaeffer's Florist at the age of 15. Whenever I got paid, I put one third in

my savings account, gave one third to my mother, and kept one third to spend on school supplies or necessities. This habit of conservative economics remained with me throughout my life, even to this day. As God's path would have it, I married a man who was also a saver of money and was just as conservative as I was about spending. Finally, I found that I learned much from observation. I discovered quite a lot when I listened more and spoke less. So the operating mechanics that worked in my life were structure, sacrifice, and dedication, combined with a pitch-in-and-do attitude, conservative economics, quiet listening, and adherence to the guidance of The Lord. These forces worked for those strong women in my family who came before me and anchored me. I learned from them.

Telling my story blended with the stories of my mother, my grandmother, and an aunt was like weaving patches into one of my grandmother's family quilt. After sixty years of living, I found myself in the middle of my life and the middle of my family. It took looking back at the past to help me find ground for the present and set sights into the future. As I viewed what each woman did and what each strove for, it caused me to reflect on who they were and how they helped me become my own individual self. I

gained insight and support from the values and upbringing of my extended family as I fulfilled many of my earlier goals. Similar to those who came before me, after I retired from my career as a teacher and my children became adults, I started anew with different goals. Life's changes have usually sent people down brand new paths that caused them to continue growing or at least continue asking those big questions:

Who are we?

Are we who we say we are or who we want to be?

Are we the goals that we set for ourselves?

Are we the roles that we play in each stage of our lives?

When we've reached those goals or moved beyond those roles, then who are we?

Family Tree

(The Christian Family Lineage)

William (or Tom) Christian married **Ellen (or Helen)** and had at least two children:

Dellie and **John Nicholas Christian** (b. 7/8/1865; d. 12/17/1960)

John Nicholas Christian (Grandpa Nick) married Matilda Matthew on 12/28/1887, and had nine children:

James Thomas (b. 7/16/1883; d. 12/17/1972) , Rosetta Gohanna, Sarah E., Mary A., Eva Ruth, Ethel Pearl, Essie V., Shedrach (Fred), William Garland, Ledia (Lee)

James Thomas Christian (Pop Tom) married **Genorah Broady** on June 9, 1909, and had nine children:

William Lester (b. 4/28/1910: d. 5/30/1973), Elizabeth, Edith, James, Rose, John Marcellus, Ed (Roger), Robbie, Alma

William Lester (Les, Leslie, or Lesser) **Christian** married **Evelyn Marian Shaw** and had two children:

Anita Lynn (b. 12/27/1951) and William Leonard (b. 9/30/1955)

Anita Lynn Christian married Robert Edward Lee on January 12, 1974, and had two children:

Erika (2/2/76) and Brian (11/18/78)

Erika Lee married Uzochukwu Obiegbu Chima in March 1998 and had three children:

Emeka Michael, Kenechi Jordan, and Kamara Lea

William (Bill) Christian married Gail Samuel on November 2, 2002, and had two children:

Samuel (b. 8/23/2005) and Orlando (b. 2/6/2007)

John Nicholas Christian *(Grandpa Nick) was a deacon at his church. He got his first job when he was 14. His mother hired him out for $19 a year. His mother, Ellen (or Helen), was a slave on the Jordon (Gordon or Claton) plantation. They lived in Nelson County, Virginia. Grandpa Nick's father was a blacksmith during slavery. When Grandpa Nick bought his place on Turkey Run in Amherst County, Virginia, he was making $0.40 a day. He was considered the best sorghum maker in the area. He married* ***Matilda Matthews*** *(b. 7/2/1865; d.3/30/1920), who was the daughter of* ***William*** *(or Thomas or Charles)* ***Matthews*** *(d. 12/20/1890) and* ***Henrietta****. Matilda's parents lived in Amherst County, Virginia, around Puppy Creek. James Thomas Christian was a tobacco farmer. He taught Sunday school at St. Peter's Church.*

Family Tree

(The Broady Lineage)

Billy Broady married **Pricilla** and had 13 children:

William Henry, Charles B., Thomas, Peter, Tolly, Nancy, **Milton**

Milton Broady married **Millie (Mildred)** and had 5 children:

Callie, Nannie, Florence Peters, **Hiram** and Julia

Hiram Broady married Ella (Elena), who was the daughter of Melvina Randolph, and had eleven children:

Rose, Hiram, Nannie, Alma, Wade, **Genorah**, Florence, Marcellus, Milton, William, George

Genorah Broady married James Thomas Christian on June 9, 1909, and had nine children:

William Lester (b. 4/28/1910: d. 5/30/1973), Elizabeth, Edith, James (Duck), Rose, John Marcellus, Ed, Robbie (Roger), Alma

William Lester (Les, Leslie and Lesser) **Christian** married **Evelyn Marian Shaw** and had two children:

Anita Lynn (b. 12/27/1951) and William Leonard (b. 9/30/1955)

Anita Lynn Christian married Robert Edward Lee on January 12, 1974, and had two children:

Erika (2/2/76) and Brian (11/18/78)

William (Bill) Christian married Gail Samuel on November 2, 2002, and had two children:

Samuel (b. 8/23/2005) and Orlando (b. 2/6/2007)

The Broady family was from Amherst County, Virginia. ***Milton Broady*** *had thirteen brothers and sisters, including William, Peter, Tolly, Nancy, Charles, and Thomas, who died 12/1893 at age 76 years 4 months and 28 days.* ***Milton Broady*** *belonged to the Claybourn (aka Claybourne or Clayborn) plantation. His wife* ***Millie*** *(Mildred) was the daughter of a Clayborn. (It is believed to have been the master himself because many years later Nannie Clayborn, a white descendant of that family, told Grandma* ***Genorah*** *what her mother had told her, that they were indeed cousins.) Milton and Millie's son* ***Hiram*** *was raised on the Claybourn plantation. Hiram carried dispatch during the Civil War.* ***Hiram****'s wife* ***Elena (or Ella)*** *belonged to the Maise (or Maize) Plantation. She was 12 when Lee surrendered.*

Family Tree

(The Shaw Lineage)

Thomas Edward Shaw Sr. (d. 1923) married **Mary Williams (Ryan)** (b. 1867; d. 1935) and had two children:

Blanche Shaw (b. 4/1892; d. 1959) and Thomas Edward Shaw (b. 1896; d. 1982)

Blanche Shaw married Charles (John) Hill and had two children:

Hazel Donzeletta Romaine (b. 2/10/1910; d. 11/1969) and **Evelyn Mary (Marian)** (b. 6/1/1914; d. 6/11/2013)

Evelyn Marian Shaw married William Lester Christian and had two children:

Anita Lynn (b. 12/27/1951) and William Leonard (b. 9/30/1955)

Anita Lynn Christian married Robert Edward Lee on January 12, 1974, and had two children:

Erika Lee (b. 2/2/1976) and Brian Lee (b.11/18/1978)

Erika Lee married Uzochukwu Obiegbu Chima in March 1998 and had three children:

Emeka Michael, Kenechi Jordan, and Kamara Lea

William (Bill) Christian married Gail Samuel on November 2, 2002, and had two children:

Samuel (b. 8/23/2005) and Orlando (b. 2/6/2007)

Mary Williams (Ryan) *was born in Maryland. She and her sister Martha were the daughters of* ***Cecilia Griffin****, who was a slave. Mary and Martha were raised by the Ryan family (a white family) after slavery ended. Martha had four children: Irving, Ollie, Mazie, and Frank Proctor. Mazie use to sing on stage and was always traveling and*

singing. When Evelyn was a child, her grandparents, Mary (Mama) and Thomas (Papa), lived with them. Blanche's brother Thomas (Brother) and his first wife Lill also lived with them. ***Thomas Edward Shaw, Sr.*** *(Papa) was a chef who cooked at a hotel in downtown Washington, DC.* ***Thomas Edward Shaw, Sr****.'s mother was named Louise. Evelyn remembers the picture of her and said that she was a white woman.* ***Blanche*** *had huge family pictures of Blanche's mother and father, cousins, and her father's mother that she carried from house to house as the family moved but left them under the steps on Quincy Place NW. Blanche bought 12 plots in Lincoln Cemetery in Suitland, Maryland, where she, her brother, her parents, and other relatives are buried. The Shaw plot is in Section K. Blanche is in Lot Row 195 Site 7.*

Family Tree

(The Pearson-Coleman Lineage)

Frank Pearson (Pap) married **Annie** and had six children:

Cordell, **Daniel**, Charlie (twin to Daniel), Mary, Edna, and Nannie

William Coleman (Papa) married **Mary Washington (Byrd/Bird)** and had five children:

Billy, Spencer, Allen, **Etta** (b. 10/18/1904; d. 8/24/2013), and **Lenora**

Daniel Pearson married **Lenora Coleman** and had two living children:

Annie Mae (b. 2/4/1921) and Robert Daniel Pearson (b. 8/11/1923; d. 6/19/2009)

Cordell Pearson married **Etta Coleman** on 9/1/1927 and had three children:

Louise Etta (b. 7/21/29), Ervan Cordell (b. 12/13/31) and Gladys Beatrice (b. 8/24/33)

Louise Pearson married Major Hinnant and had one child:

Sandra

Ervan Pearson married Elizabeth (Liz) and had eight children:

Lorraine, Ervan Jr., Bernice, Gregory, Sharon, Donna, Monroe, Doreen

Gladys Pearson married June Hines and had three children:

Deborah, Kathy, Cordell

Annie Mae Pearson married Robert Edward Lee, Sr., and had four children:

Lenora (b. 6/3/41), Elaine (b. 5/1/43), Diane (b. 5/30/47), **Robert Edward, Jr.** (b.4/7/49)

Robert Edward Lee, Jr. married **Anita Lynn Christian** on 1/12/74 and had two children:

Erika and Brian

Frank Pearson *(Pap) was from Burke, Virginia.* ***Mary Washington*** *was from Falls Church, Virginia and her stepfather was Henry Ampy Byrd (Bird). Mary was a midwife and helped to bring many babies from her area into the world.* ***William Coleman (Papa)*** *was from Haiti. He came to the United States with his mother and father when he was three years old. His father was a blacksmith. William Coleman was the caretaker for Senator Lafollette's estate in Virginia. In the early 20th century, Lenora Coleman and her sister* ***Etta Coleman*** *met and married two brothers in the Pearson family. Lenora married Daniel and* ***Etta*** married Cordell. *Although Lenora and Daniel had children, they did not live to see them grow up. Annie Mae's mother, Lenora, died of indigestion when she was 6, and her father was killed in a train accident when she was 14. After Annie Mae's mother died her grandparents, William (Papa) and Mary raised Annie Mae and Robert (Bob) until Mary died. Then their Aunt Etta and Uncle Cordell continued to raise Annie Mae while Bob stayed with his grandfather.*

Family Tree

(The Lee Family Lineage)

John Milton Lee married **Maria (Mariah) Radcliff** and had eight children:

Carroll, Ernest, John Milton, Mildred, Walter, Powell, Charlie, and **Robert E**. (b. 12/24/1918; d. 9/10/1978)

Maria Radcliff Lee later married Robert Thornton and had three children:

Golden, Shirley, and J. Clarence

Robert Edward Lee, Sr. married Annie Mae Pearson and had four children:

Lenora, Elaine, Diane, **Robert Edward, Jr.**

Lenora Lee married James Newborn and had six children:

James, Garret, Anthony, Tracy, Kevin, and Kelly

Elaine Lee married Melvin Marshall and had five children:

Melvin, Michael, Mark, Terri, and Marlon

Diane Lee married John Mont and had three children:

John, Nichole, and Troy

Robert Edward Lee, Jr. married **Anita Lynn Christian** on 1/12/74 and had two children:

Erika Michelle and Brian Edward

Erika Lee married in March 1998 and had three children:

Emeka Michael, Kenechi Jordan, and Kamara Lea

Maria Radcliff and the Lee families were from Loudon County, Virginia. They lived in and around Leesburg. Maria was born in the old Broad Run section. She died on February 7, 1951. Robert Edward Lee, Sr. was a butcher. His wife, Annie Mae was a nursing assistant at Arlington Hospital and Columbia Hospital for Women.

Timeline

1890
- Genorah was born on June 12, 1891

1900
- Etta was born on October 18, 1904
- Genorah married Tom on June 9, 1909

1910
- Les was born on April 28, 1910
- Evelyn was born on June 1, 1914

1920
- Etta married Cordell on September 1, 1927

1930
- Evelyn graduated Miner Teachers College in 1937
- In 1939 Cordell built the family home in Arlington

1940
- Genorah and Tom moved to Clifford in 1942
- Evelyn married Les on June 5, 1943

1950
- Anita was born on December 27, 1951
- Evelyn and Les moved to Vista Street in 1956
- Etta and Cordell moved to Washington, DC

1960

1970
- In 1972 Tom died; Anita graduated from DCTC
- In 1973 Les died; Bill graduated from Carroll HS
- Anita married Robert on January 12, 1974
- In 1976 Cordell died

1980
- Anita began interviewing Genorah and recorded data
- Genorah died on February 11, 1985

1990
- Anita began interviewing Evelyn and recorded data
- Anita began writing "Herstory"

2000
- Anita began interviewing Etta and recorded data

2010
- Evelyn died on April 11, 2013
- Eta died on August 24, 2013

Local Background Information

Amherst County, Virginia

In 1761 Amherst County was created from the lower part of the large Albemarle County. The county was named after Sir Jeffrey Amherst who was said to be the "Conqueror of Canada" because he led the British forces that secured Canada from the French. Although he never stepped foot in the colony, Sir Jeffrey Amherst was named the Governor of Virginia. The soil in that part of Virginia was good for farming, and tobacco was the chief crop from its earliest days. Later apple orchards and mixed farming replaced tobacco. Timber mining and milling became important industries. During the Civil War, Amherst County produced more Confederate soldiers per capita than any other area in the Confederate States of America.

According to an article entitled "New Glasgow" in Lynch's Ferry Magazine, during the 1730's an Englishman named William Cabell began setting claim to most of the territory along the James River from Lynchburg to Nelson County. Clifford, a small community in Amherst County, was incorporated as Cabellsburg in 1785 as a tribute to Cabell. It later was renamed New Glasgow. By the early 1800's New Glasgow became a vibrant town with stores, taverns, schools, a tan yard, and church (New Glasgow). An article entitled, "Clifford" in the same magazine says it was also known by the name of Five Oaks before it was

named Clifford. For a short time it was the county seat.

The present day intersection of Route 151 and Route 610 in Clifford was once the main stop for stage coaches between Charlottesville and Lynchburg. St. Peter's Baptist Church is located on Route 151, called Patrick Henry Highway. Camperdown was built on what is now Route 610 by Dr. James Murray Brown, the physician of William Cabell (Clifford 3, 19, 22). Dr. Brown built it near his friend, David S. Garland, who owned Brick House (Renfrow). Camperdown was the house where Elijah Fletcher stayed when he became headmaster of New Glasgow Academy, a school which was across the road from the house. Camperdown was sold to Dr. Samuel Scott in the nineteenth century and the Maxwell family in the early 20th century before the Christian family bought it (Amherst, books 62 and 121). Although this home of Genorah and James Thomas Christian can no longer be seen because it was razed in 2006 to create a development for estate homes, some part of the land is still owned by members of the Christian family, including the author of this book. The Ruritan Club and "Brick House" are preserved sites located nearby on the same road, Route 610, which is also known as Fletcher's Level Road.

A small section just one mile north of the intersection of Routes 151and 610 is the area where the Broady School and the Broady Cemetery were located (Rainville). Today in the area newer homes have been built, but the Broady Family Cemetery, which is

maintained by family member Jasper Fletcher, can still be found just off Patrick Henry Highway on Roses Mill Road.

Amherst County is now part of the Lynchburg metropolitan area. It has an area of 479 square miles and has a population of 32,353. Amherst County is adjacent to Nelson County, Appomattox County, Rockbridge County, Campbell County, and Bedford County. The city of Lynchburg is twenty miles north of Clifford on Route 29. Clifford, with a population of 89 people, is transforming itself as the community with renewed growth.

Before explorer Captain John Smith and English colonists came, various Native Americans from the Iroquois Confederation lived in what we now call northern Virginia along the "Little Falls of the Potomac River." "Little Falls" was considered an obstacle when people were trying to sail across the Potomac, but the area had rich soil and was popular with local tribes. The colonists created a government as part of the Church of England, and The Falls Church refers to the original church and parish established in 1632. One very old cabin built by a colonist in 1699 withstood the test of time and still stands. It was near this cabin and some crossroads of Indian trails that in 1734 The Falls Church was officially set up. In 1875 Falls Church became an independent township within Fairfax County.

In 1915 when Etta was living in Falls Church, Virginia, it was the largest town in Fairfax County with a population of over 1300 people. Of those residing there, 88% were white and 12% were black. Both blacks and whites owned homes on sites with two to 38 acres of land. The town was a center of commerce with stores, offices, and churches. The Second Baptist Church of Falls Church, where her family had membership, was first built in 1870 and in 1922 moved to its present location on Costner Drive in Fairfax County, just outside of the city of Falls Church

(100th Birthday; Fendley).

In the 1700's Lord Fairfax made land grants to many families, including Francis Coffer and Henry Ward, as the original property owners of present day Burke, Virginia. Hannah Ward married Lt. Col. Silas Burke, a wealthy landowner, businessman, and local politician. Burke, Virginia, was named after him. When the Orange and Alexander Railroad was opened in the 1840's, a station was built just below the hill of Burke's home and was called "Burke's Station." Burke's Station became the name for the entire area. In 1903, after Henry Copperthite bought the Burke house, the name of the post office was changed to Burke. In 1861, Henry Coffer's descendant, Francis Coffer IV, left all of his wealth in the form of a considerable amount of land to Phillis Pearson, one of his slaves, and her four sons whom he fathered (Foley; History). Etta's husband, Cordell Pearson, was a descendant who inherited a portion of that land in Fairfax County.

In 1951, the U.S. Civil Aeronautics Administration began preparations to build Washington Dulles International Airport in Burke, and 4,520 acres of land belonging to landowners, including the Pearson family, was usurped by the government. In 1958, though, it was decided to construct the airport in Chantilly, Virginia, instead of Burke. The Pearson family could not get back the land that they had relinquished.

Arlington County, Virginia, is 26 square miles of land right across the Potomac River from Washington. DC. Native Americans lived in that area for thousands of years before Captain John Smith sailed up the Potomac River and explored their villages of grassy longhouses. During the 17th and 18th centuries, land grants from England were given to various people. England continued to have much influence. The name Arlington is attributed to Henry Bennet, first Earl of Arlington. A leading family and Arlington County honored him by the use of his name. An estate built in 1778 by George Washington Parke Custis, grandson of George and Martha Washington, was named Arlington House to link with the name of the Custis family's Arlington Plantation on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Custis's daughter, Mary Anna, married Robert E. Lee, who became the Confederate General, and Arlington House was where they lived. Arlington was part of the parcel of land that once completed the diamond shape of Washington, DC, when 10 square acres were donated by Virginia to the federal government in the formation of the federal capital district in 1790. In 1846, though, Congress returned the land that Virginia had ceded because of disputes over slavery and representation. During the Civil War the government took the Custis-Lee estate and in 1863 used part of it to form a temporary community called Freedman's Village, which housed, hospitalized, and educated former slaves. This village remained until the 1890's. Land from the estate was also developed into Arlington National Cemetery. Today, the Pentagon,

dedicated in 1943, and Arlington National Cemetery are both located in Arlington County. Arlington is made up of distinct neighborhoods. One such neighborhood was Penrose. The neighborhood was first developed in 1882 and because it was close to Freedman's Village there were no covenants. The neighborhood grew rapidly during the first part of the 20th century since it was an easy commute to jobs in Washington, DC. Many blacks, including the family of Dr. Charles Drew, moved there. The house that Etta and Cordell built on South Nelson Street was just around the corner from the Drew family's home (100th Birthday).

Washington, District of Columbia, the capital of the United States, was a planned city immaculately designed by Pierre L'Enfant, who was commissioned by George Washington. Since L'Enfant never completed the project, Andrew Ellicott and Benjamin Banneker, surveyors working with L'Enfant, finished the work of creating this unique city. Both Maryland and Virginia donated land along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers to form a 100 square mile federal district, shaped like a diamond, and in 1791 this new capital was founded. However, in 1846 Virginia requested that its donated portion be returned; and after Congress did so, Washington remained as a 68.3 square mile layout with a chuck of the southwestern section of the triangle gone. The District of Columbia was divided into four quadrants: Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast with the Capitol as the focal point. North Capitol, South Capitol, and East Capitol Streets as well as the National Mall were major radii emanating from the Capitol.

The streets were set up on a grid system with chronologically numbered streets running north and south from the Capitol parallel to North Capitol and South Capitol Streets. Streets running east and west of the Capitol parallel to East Capitol Street and The Mall were in alphabetical order with the first set of streets being each of

the letters of the alphabet and the succeeding sets being words. Avenues, named after the states in the union, ran diagonally. The boundaries for the city were Eastern Avenue, Western Avenue, and Southern Avenue. Boundary Street—now called Florida Avenue—was the original northern boundary.

The Organic Act of 1871 created a single municipal government in DC. With this act The District of Columbia set up a local government with an elected assembly, board of public works, and a governor named Alexander R. Shepherd. This new municipality revamped the infrastructure and modernized the city with paved streets and sidewalks, sewers, and gas and water mains. Governor Shepherd overspent his budget but developed Washington into a strongly premier city for our nation's capital. Today Washington, DC continues to be the seat of the federal government while also operating a local government. The city, though, has limited self-governance because the federal government has jurisdiction over DC and can overturn local laws. DC has no senators but has one very active non-voting delegate to Congress, Eleanor Holmes Norton. After the ratification of the 23rd Amendment to the Constitution, the people of the District of Columbia were finally allowed to vote for President of the United States for the first time in 1961.

The number of blacks in Washington, DC, has been significant even from the time that the city was first created. By the 1860's approximately 80% of the city's

11,000 African Americans were free persons. From 1800 to 1940 approximately 30% of the people of DC were black and in 2010 the black population was at 50.7%.

Outside of being a seat of government, Washington DC is also a city of neighborhoods. Washington Street (Averill, map 25) and the home where Blanche was born no longer exist in The Mount Vernon Triangle area of downtown. Now, new stores, a convention center, high rise buildings, and condominiums have replaced the homes on streets and in alleys that once were there. The old downtown area has been completely transformed too, with new businesses. The market at 7th and O Street has been converted into an upscale high-rise mixture of condominiums, restaurants, and stores. Central Public Library at 7th and K Streets is now home to the Historical Society of DC. The home at 439 Eye Street NW, where Evelyn lived as a child, does not exist. The homes on Corcoran Street and T Street in the Logan Circle area have been renovated. Today in the Carver neighborhood, where Brother Frank's house was located, and in Woodridge, where Anita grew up, renovations are currently happening. A new light rail system is being built along the H Street and Benning Road corridor up to the River Terrace area. It is exciting to be in Washington and sight-see the museums and monuments, to view the cherry blossoms in spring along the Tidal Basin, or to tour one of the government buildings; but it is also great to visit the diverse neighborhoods.

Washington, DC, has grown over the past two hundred twenty years and now is also the center of a large metropolis. The Washington Metropolitan Area includes 25 regions in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia that radiate from Washington. In Maryland, it includes Prince George's, Montgomery, Frederick, Calvert, and Charles Counties. In Virginia, eleven counties—Arlington, Clarke, Fairfax, Fauquier, Frederick, Loudon, Prince Williams, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Warren— are part of the metro area. With the other counties and independent cities that make up the Washington Metropolitan Area, it is expansive. Mount Rainier, Maryland, is in Prince George's County. It is adjacent to the Northeastern border of the District of Columbia, Eastern Avenue. The apartment in Mount Rainier where Anita and Robert lived sat right on that boundary line. Brookeville, where Anita currently resides, is in Upper Montgomery County, Maryland, north of the tip of DC's diamond. The historical town of Brookeville was capital of the United States for a day in 1814 when the British invaded and burned the White House during the War of 1812. President James Madison and his staff fled to the home of Caleb Bentley in Brookeville and conducted business there. Each of the regions in the Washington Metropolitan Area is rich in history, beauty, and interesting sites. Visiting Washington and its Metropolitan area can be an educational experience for people of all ages.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anita Lynn Lee is the author of three children's books: *The Ghost and Me, Kenny's Amazing Adventures*, and *Princess Lea Lucia*. She first began interviewing, taking notes, and drafting short stories about matriarchs in her family during the 1980's. It was only recently, after retiring from thirty-four years of teaching, that Mrs. Lee reread her recordings and was motivated to write *A Thread Runs through Herstory*. Mrs. Anita Lynn Lee and her family are from the Washington, Maryland, and Virginia region and she enjoys studying the history and culture of the area.



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What propels us forward in life? Is it our ancestry or who we are that dictates where we are going? A Thread Runs Through Herstory is a fascinating narrative of family, history, and culture. It is about four ordinary women who rely on their faith to overcome challenges in their lives. As each woman tells her story in a personal way, the book relates some historical events that span more than a century. The humorous, sensitive, frightening, and uplifting stories that these African American women tell are definitely inspiring.

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